

**Imagining Taiwan:
The Making and the Museological
Representation of Art in Taiwan's
Quest for Identity (1987-2010)**

SOPHIE McINTYRE

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Research School of Arts and Humanities
Australian National University

December 2012

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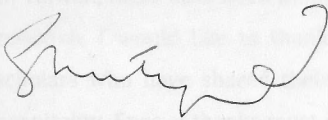
Australian National University

December 2012

DECLARATION

I, Sophie McIntyre, certify that this thesis is my own original work. It contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made. It has not been submitted for any other degree.

Signed



Sophie McIntyre

Research School of the Arts and Humanities

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ABSTRACT

This thesis probes and analyses the critical role of art in the shaping of Taiwan's national identity during the period 1987-2010. With the rise of democratisation and national identity consciousness (*bentu yishi*), Taiwan's quest for national identity intensified after the lifting of martial law in 1987. The thesis challenges the view that art has played an inconsequential role in this identity discourse by demonstrating that artists, curators and art museums have significantly contributed towards the processes of identity formation, particularly during the peak period of the early-mid 1990s.

Focusing on the nature and extent of the contribution of artists, curators and art museums to Taiwan's quest for identity, the thesis explores how national identity narratives were imagined, interpreted, projected and transmitted, nationally and internationally, through the production, selection and exhibition of art from Taiwan. Structurally, the thesis contextualizes each socio-political period, providing the backdrop for a series of case studies. These demonstrate how artists, curators and art museums became active agents in the processes of national identity formation, not only promoting but also critiquing and contesting identity narratives revolving around the concept of a 'Taiwan nation'.

Given that national identities are relational and fluid constructs, the thesis reveals how identity discourses in art had diminished in significance by the early twenty-first century when globalisation, the rise of China, and art market forces transformed identity discourses in art from a Taiwan-centred narrative into one embracing not only regional and global perspectives but, most critically, dialogue and exchange with China.

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ROMANISATION

There are two main systems of romanisation employed by scholars writing on Taiwan: Wade-Giles (which is generally used in Taiwan); and Hanyu Pinyin (used on the Mainland), which I refer to as Chinese pinyin in this thesis. In keeping with the subject of the thesis, I have adopted the Wade-Giles system for names and places in Taiwan; and Chinese pinyin for Chinese names and places. I use the conventional name order for Chinese (and Japanese) names (i.e. surname followed by the first name), and the English name order for English names.

The exceptions are when individuals have their own idiosyncratic names, which they themselves have chosen and by which they are widely recognised; and when authors and publishers follow a different system of transliteration. Where possible, I include Chinese characters alongside Chinese names, titles and terms especially where they first appear in the text. I use Chinese traditional characters except for those from Mainland China in which case I use simplified characters. A glossary of frequently used names and terms is included at the end of the thesis.

INTRODUCTION

Taiwan's national identity and its quest for international recognition have been the most important and contentious issues in Taiwan during the last forty years. Neither an independent country, nor an integral part of China, Taiwan is effectively a nation-state without national sovereignty.¹ Since the Republic of China (ROC) was forced to withdraw from the United Nations (UN) in 1971, in deference to the recognition of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Taiwan's sense of national character and identity has been in a state of flux.² Taiwan's indeterminate national status has generated significant anxiety, debate and discord domestically and internationally as issues of recognition and of representing and naming Taiwan, its people and culture, remain unresolved. Successive leaders and governments in Taiwan have endeavoured to re-define and reassert Taiwan's national identity. They have built momentum at various times for different identity models through a range of social, political and cultural schemes and initiatives. The role of culture, broadly speaking, is often regarded as having the potential to influence social change and it is my contention that art – specifically the making and representation of art from Taiwan – has played a crucial role in national identity formation, but, importantly, this has not been fully acknowledged or analysed in any detail in extant literature.

The central aim of this thesis is to examine the contributions made by artists, curators and museums to the processes of national identity formation in Taiwan. It focuses on the post-martial law period from 1987 until 2010, when issues concerning Taiwan's national identity *vis-à-vis* its relationship with

¹ Taiwan is officially regarded by the majority of UN members as part of China and therefore is not deemed to have 'national' status. However, in Taiwan this view has been contested, particularly by the Democratic Progressive Party who have traditionally promoted Taiwan's independence.

² In October 1971, Taiwan (ROC) was voted out of the United Nations in the General Assembly Resolution and succeeded by the People's Republic of China (PRC) which is recognised by most countries as the sole, legitimate government of China. Taiwan has diplomatic relations with twenty-three sovereign states, none of which are major world powers.

China peaked. Specifically, I explore the nexus between politics and art in the making, representation and imagining of Taiwan's identity. The thesis is guided by two interrelated research objectives. First, to analyse the ways and extent to which artists, museums, and curators responded to a changing national identity discourse during the period from 1987 until 2010.³ Second, to demonstrate how identity discourses shifted at this time from a Taiwan-centred narrative into one that embraced regional and global perspectives.

It is the contention of this thesis that debates over Taiwan's identity were primarily politically driven and comprised two parallel concerns and agendas: the re-definition of Taiwan's national and cultural identity; and the need for international recognition. I investigate how these twin discourses have intersected and transformed identity narratives in contemporary art, and specifically in the production and museological representation of art. This is examined through the lens of four artist case studies and several major exhibitions of contemporary art from Taiwan, presented nationally and internationally during this period. In this study I focus on contemporary art, including painting, digital art (e.g. photography, video art), and installation art, as distinct from more traditional forms of art and craft, such as calligraphy and ceramics. This is because the four contemporary artists examined in this thesis worked in and across these media, and also the main exhibitions I discuss predominantly featured works in these media.⁴ Museums refers to art

³ The term *discourse* generally refers to written or spoken communication (including ideas, debates, policies, and theories) developed and transmitted by institutions (political and cultural), groups and individuals. In an art context, it is also used to refer to particular systems of knowledge and practices that can include the visual image.

⁴ Artists practicing Chinese ink painting, sculpture, and printmaking are mentioned, where relevant, but their works are not a focus of discussion. As in other parts of the world contemporary artists in Taiwan often work across disciplines and media so that distinctions between "contemporary" and "traditional" art, and "art" and "applied art", have become blurred. Having said that, the thesis focuses primarily on Western-derived contemporary art forms, as distinct from Chinese traditional arts and crafts.

museums⁵ and principally to the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (臺北市立美術館) (TFAM), which is Taiwan's premier art museum and the main museum case study in this thesis.⁶

Taiwan's quest for identity has attracted increased scholarly attention in Taiwan and overseas over the past decade or more, especially in the fields of political science and history. However, there has been substantially less scholarly research undertaken on the role of visual art in this identity discourse. Articles, dissertations, and books have been written about identity issues in Taiwan art, but there has been no detailed or systematic study of the triangular relationship between the production, selection, and display of art in national identity formation, from 1987 to the present, in the English language. Certainly, there have been none that have focused on these four key artists, and on the series of important national and international exhibitions examined here. This thesis thus offers a unique insight into the ways these artists, curators and museums actively contributed in distinctive ways to this national identity discourse, and during this critical period in Taiwan's history. I argue that art has played a significant role in Taiwan's quest for identity, as a vehicle for cultural diplomacy and national consciousness raising. Focusing on the impact of political and cultural nationalism on visual art, it sheds light on the complexities and paradoxes of Taiwan's quest for identity. This thesis thus fills a critical gap in scholarship on Taiwan's identity and its art, which, during the past decade or more, has been overshadowed by the popularity of art from China, which attracts increasing international, commercial and scholarly attention.

⁵ In Taiwan, the customary Chinese translation of contemporary art is *dangdai yishu* (當代藝術). This thesis employs the American definition of museums as government-funded public institutions as distinct from galleries which are commercial, private businesses.

⁶ The Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM) opened in 1983, and is discussed in detail in Chapter One. Throughout this thesis I refer to it as the TFAM.

My research is empirically-based and has been developed over fifteen years during which time I undertook academic research and curatorial projects in Taiwan.⁷ I visited artist studios and exhibitions and conducted interviews with artists, curators, museum professionals, art critics and scholars.⁸ The information derived from these interactions has been indispensable to this study; I have also maintained contact with my key informants throughout the writing period.⁹ Notwithstanding my long-standing engagement in Taiwan, my position and perspective is, fundamentally, as an observer and outsider from the Western world. The mid-1990s, when I lived in Taipei, was a critical time in Taiwan's history and identity trajectory.¹⁰ Democratisation, economic modernisation and the lifting of martial law in 1987 had given rise to an upsurge of political and cultural nationalism and Taiwan consciousness, or *bentu yishi* (本土意識).¹¹ From the late 1980s until the mid-late 1990s the vast majority of artists, curators and museums focused their attention on the re-definition, and re-presentation of Taiwan's identity. During subsequent visits to Taiwan I have witnessed significant changes in Taiwan's art field. Most notably, national identity issues no longer hold the same appeal for local artists and curators who have re-directed their attention to issues of global significance. Remarkably, many museums and some artists now promote cultural dialogue and exchange with China where some Taiwan artists are now living.

This thesis seeks to analyse and explain some of the political, economic and cultural mechanisms, pressures and impulses informing this identity discourse in art. I argue that Taiwan's quest for identity revolved around a desire to be

⁷ For more information on these curatorial projects see the section on Methodology in this Introduction.

⁸ See Methodology in this Introduction.

⁹ See Methodology in this Introduction.

¹⁰ I first went to Taiwan in 1990 (after China) for six months studying Chinese and teaching English. In 1995 I returned for one year for academic research; and during the following years I returned every one or two years to undertake academic and curatorial research.

¹¹ The definition and significance of this term *bentu yishi* is further discussed in this Introduction pp.17-18.

recognised and accepted by the international community as a democratic, culturally pluralistic and therefore distinctive and, ultimately, independent country. This thesis explores how art was deployed by government agencies (including museums), as well as by individual artists, curators and critics as a vehicle for Taiwan consciousness-raising domestically, as well as for cultural diplomacy overseas. The main questions driving this research are firstly, what inspired scores of artists and curators to engage with such enthusiasm in national identity issues during the 1990s? Secondly, why has their interest in these issues diminished at a time when Taiwan's identity is arguably more at risk with the rise of China?

In visual art, the desire to demonstrate a sense of national and cultural distinctiveness while simultaneously maintaining an international perspective and profile is not unique to Taiwan. During the 1990s especially, scholars working across the field of contemporary Asian art examined the tensions and paradoxes underpinning identity discourses in art, characterised by the yearning to be globally connected while remaining relevant to the local community.¹² This interest in identity issues in Asian art corresponded with rapid economic and cultural development experienced by many Asian countries during this decade. It also responded to global trends in postmodern and postcolonial studies which questioned and challenged notions of cultural authenticity, and explored the development, conditions, and consequences of colonialism in relation to identity formation and concepts of cultural identity and difference.¹³ The Japan Foundation Asia Center, for example, organised

¹² See for example essays on Asian art in the following anthologies: Caroline Turner (ed.), *Tradition and Change: Contemporary Art of Asia and the Pacific*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1993; *Art and Social Change: Contemporary Art in Asia and the Pacific*, Pandanus, Canberra, 2005; John Clark (ed.), *Modernity in Asian Art*, Wild Peony, Sydney, 1993; Furuichi Yasuko, Nakamoto Kazumi (eds.), *Asian Modernism: Diverse Development in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand*, The Japan Foundation Asia Center, Tokyo, 1995.

¹³ Scholars and curators including John Clark, Geeta Kapur, and Apinan Poshyananda have all explored the impact of postmodernism and postcolonialism in Asian art. See, for example, the 1991 conference organised by Clark entitled *Modernism and Postmodernism in Asian Art*, at the Australian National University; and his book *Modernity in Asian Art*, Wild Peony Press, Sydney, 1993. Also see: Geeta Kapur, "Globalisation and Culture," *Third Text* 39, Summer, 1997, pp.21-

international symposia which brought together scholars who examined a range of identity issues in Asian art relating to the meaning, representation, and future of art in Asia, as well as its histories.¹⁴ These tensions were also highlighted in a series of major exhibitions of contemporary Asian art presented during the 1990s which examined changing conceptions of identity, tradition and place in the context of modernisation, nationalism and globalisation.¹⁵ Although it is not my intention to undertake a comparative or cross-cultural study of Asian art, the literature and these exhibitions have indirectly informed this thesis and provide a backdrop for this analysis of national identity issues in art from Taiwan. I argue that Taiwan is a unique, under-explored and valuable case study through which to explore some of the anxieties, tensions and challenges many contemporary artists in Asia experienced in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries; and the strategies they employed to maintain national relevance and compete in the increasingly global art world.

The proliferation of biennials/triennials during the 1990s was partly responsible for the growing international interest in and popularity of contemporary Asian art.¹⁶ The biennial/triennial phenomenon was manifest in most developed countries across Asia¹⁷ and, notably, Taipei was one of the first Asian cities to embrace this biennial trend in the 1990s. The Taipei

38; and the book by Apinan Poshyananda entitled *Contemporary art in Asia: Traditions/Tensions*, Asia Society Galleries, New York, 1996 that was published in conjunction with the traveling exhibition of the same name.

¹⁴ The symposia included: *Asian Contemporary Art Reconsidered* (1997), *Asian Art: Prospects for the Future* (1999) and *Asia in Transition: Representation and Identity* (2002).

¹⁵ These exhibitions include: *Traditions/Tensions: Contemporary Art in Asia* (1996-1998); *Asia-Pacific Triennial* (particularly 1993 and 1996); *Asian Modernism: Diverse Development in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand* (1995-1996); *Modernity and Beyond: Themes in South East Asian Art* (1995).

¹⁶ 'Biennial' can also be spelt 'biennale' which is the Italian translation. Except when referring to specific exhibitions that use 'biennale' I use 'biennial'.

¹⁷ From the 1990s these included the Gwangju Biennale (1995), Taipei Biennial (1996), Fukuoka Triennale (1999), Shanghai Biennale (2000), Yokohama Triennale (2001), Chengdu Biennale (2001), Busan Biennial (2002), Nanjing Triennial (2002), Guangzhou Triennial (2003), Beijing Biennale (2003), and Singapore Biennale (2006). Prior to the 1990s there were also some country-based and open-call biennials/triennials in the region. For more information on the biennial phenomenon see Chapter Two pp.118-119.

Biennial along with Taiwan's representations at the Venice Biennale, are the two main exhibition case studies examined in this thesis. Presented once every two or three years respectively, these large-scale exhibitions bring together the national and international in one location, displaying local art from the country hosting the event alongside artworks from other selected countries. In Asia, the biennial/triennial trend is associated with the effects of globalisation and rapid economic growth in the region. They are deployed by governments as marketing tools to promote the nation/city and its cultural achievements to the world. This thesis demonstrates how the Taipei Biennial and the Venice Biennale, in particular, provided a crucial platform for Taiwan's city and national governments to promote themselves to the world.

Over the centuries, art has been utilised by political regimes across the world as a vehicle for propaganda and national consciousness-raising.¹⁸ Scholars have demonstrated how it has been deployed widely in Asia to engender national allegiance, identity and pride.¹⁹ When discussing 'the national', as art historian, John Clark, describes it, a distinction must be made between official forms of national art generated by the government and artistic expressions of nationalism where the artist has greater agency.²⁰ In Taiwan, during the decade after the lifting of martial law, I argue that this distinction became blurred as politics and art became closely ideologically aligned, forming a symbiotic relationship that centred on the re-definition of the *Taiwanese*

¹⁸ For a discussion on the role of museums in national identity construction see, Carol Duncan, 'Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship', in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (eds.), Smithsonian Institution, Washington, 1991, pp.88-103; Dawn Ades (ed.), *Art and power: Europe under the dictators 1930-45*, Thames and Hudson and Hayward Gallery, London, 1995; Michelle Facos and Sharon L. Hirsh (eds.), *Art, Culture, and National Identity in Fin-de-siècle Europe*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2003.

¹⁹ A selection of these include Asia (general): Alison Carroll, *The Revolutionary Century: Art in Asia 1900-2000*, Palgrave Macmillan, Australia, 2010; John Clark, 'Nationalism and the Allegories of the State', *Modern Asian Art*, Craftsman House, Sydney, 1998, pp.239-259. On China: Julia F. Andrews, *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1994; Maria Galikowski, *Art and Politics in China*, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1998. For individual essays on different countries see Turner, *Art and Social Change*, 2005.

²⁰ Clark, *Modern Asian Art*, 1998, p.239.

nation. However, as this thesis demonstrates, this relationship between politics and art shifted in the new millennium when the idea of the nation began to lose its attraction in Taiwan. There are numerous domestic political and cultural factors that contributed to this shift, but this thesis contends that it was mainly engendered by the effects of globalisation and the rise of China in the world. It examines the role of the state in the ways Taiwan art is promoted, especially overseas; and, more generally, it explores the extent to which art and museological discourses in Taiwan were influenced by international art trends during the 1990s and 2000s.

The question of agency is central to this study which explores the roles artists and curators played in this identity discourse, as visual commentators and cultural representatives of Taiwan internationally. This is not to imply they were merely cultural agents for the government. As the artist case studies demonstrate, some artists were also activists and writers, and were critical of the government and Taiwan's quest for identity. Nor does it suggest that Taiwan's art community was united in its support of Taiwanese nationalism or independence. This thesis offers a nuanced account of the ways in which members of Taiwan's art community engaged in and generated their own distinctive narratives and counter-narratives either to endorse, question or challenge nationalist discourses. Artistic agency is also influenced by the economy, and this thesis demonstrates the ways in which commercial imperatives impacted on the transmission of visual representations of identity in Taiwan during this period under discussion.

If a nation is, as Benedict Anderson argues, an imagined construct existing within the sphere of representation, by what means and on whose terms does a work of art become *representative* of a nation?²¹ What inspires and influences expressions of national identity in art; and what are the ideological

²¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. Verso, London, 1991, pp.178-184.

mechanisms at play in the production, selection and display of these images? It is widely recognised that museums are 'powerful identity-defining machines' and have a 'political usefulness'.²² Scholars, including Anderson, demonstrate the important nation-building role museums have played over the centuries²³ as vehicles for the invention, dissemination and legitimisation of identity narratives which can engender a sense of national consciousness and pride. Based on my research, I demonstrate how the Taipei Fine Art Museum (TFAM), Taiwan's premier public art museum and the main museum case study in this thesis, is unequivocally influenced by politics and this study demonstrates the instrumental role it has played in the construction and representation of Taiwan's identity, nationally and internationally. Drawing on Raymond Williams' idea that a representation can 'symbolise' or 'stand for' something that is absent I argue that art in Taiwan has been deployed by museums such as the TFAM to stand-in for the (absent) nation.²⁴

The literature on the origins and meaning of the nation, national identity and nationalism is vast.²⁵ The critical approach employed here is consistent with Benedict Anderson's concept of the nation as an *idea* that exists within the imagination, but that nevertheless has the power to engender a sense of

²² Duncan, *Exhibiting Cultures*, 1991, p.101.

²³ Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, Routledge, London, 1995; Donald Preziosi, 'Collecting/Museums', in *Critical Terms for Art History*, Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (eds.), University of Chicago Press, 1996, pp. 281-291; Duncan, *Exhibiting Cultures*, 1991, pp.88-103.

²⁴ Raymond Williams, *Key Words: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Fontana Press, London, 1985 (1976), p.267

²⁵ In this thesis I draw on some of the following literature on nationalism and national identity. In addition to Anderson's book *Imagined Communities*, see especially Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change*, Widenfield and Nicholson, London, 1964; *Nations and Nationalism*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1983; *Nationalism*. New York University Press, New York, 1997. Other works that are referred to or that have informed this thesis include: Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge University Press, 1990; Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, 1983; Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, Routledge, London, 1990; Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism*, Routledge, London, 1998.

national community and identity consciousness.²⁶ Anderson's view is similar to Ernest Gellner's proposition that nationalism creates nations, based on the congruence between forms of cultural identity and political belonging. In this thesis, the nation and national identity are viewed as imagined and interrelated constructs inspired and shaped by the forces of cultural and political nationalism. As the Taiwan sociologist, Hsiao A-chin (蕭阿勤) points out, 'the thrust of Taiwanese nationalism is to achieve congruity between ethnic/national boundaries (the Taiwanese)', and political boundaries (an independent island country); that is, between national identity and the nation.²⁷ While acknowledging the strong emotional response the idea of the nation engenders (especially in Taiwan which is officially regarded a 'non-nation'), this research is based on the premise that national identity is not a bounded or fixed essence but rather a fluid and changeable construct. It is socially generated and is shaped by changing national and global circumstances. The purpose of this study is therefore not to define, demonstrate nor validate the cultural distinctiveness of Taiwan's identity, but to explore the ways it has been visually interpreted and represented in art during this period.

Taiwan's identity - a site of enquiry and contestation

Taiwan's unresolved 'identity complex',²⁸ has provided fertile ground for scholars who have explored the evolution and problematic status of Taiwan's identity *vis-à-vis* China. Since the lifting of martial law, there has been a significant increase in scholarly research focusing on Taiwan's identity in disciplines including politics, economics, history, anthropology, sociology, and

²⁶ Hsiao points out theorists who have written on Taiwanese nationalism either employ Anderson's 'imagined community model' or the 'political competition model', the latter of which Hsiao prefers as it foregrounds the particularities of Taiwanese nationalism. See A-chin Hsiao, *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism*, Routledge, London, 2000, pp.9-11.

²⁷ Hsiao, *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism*, 2000, p.12.

²⁸ Gunter Schubert and Jens Damm (eds.), 'Introduction', *Taiwanese Identity in the Twenty-first Century: Domestic Regional and Global Perspectives*, Routledge, Oxon, 2011, p.1. Harrison also discusses the 'Taiwan complex' see Mark Harrison, *Legitimacy, Meaning and Knowledge in the Making of Taiwanese Identity*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2006, pp.174-175.

cultural studies. Taiwan's political and socio-economic transformation into a flourishing democracy and its so-called 'Economic Miracle'²⁹ has attracted by far the most scholarly attention.³⁰ The role played by culture in Taiwan's national identity formation has been widely acknowledged. However, the literature mostly examines culture in relation to language, literature, education, religion, heritage, popular culture, and cinema, and contemporary art has certainly not received the same degree of attention. For example, in several anthologies which focus on culture, visual art is either ignored,³¹ or is addressed in a short essay, restricted to a specific genre and/or period.³² Hsiao A-chin, who has closely examined the role of culture in national identity formation, claims that the contribution made by art is comparably 'much less significant' than that of literature, language and history.³³ While acknowledging Hsiao's important contribution, I contend that artists and art museums have in fact played a crucial role in the construction and representation of Taiwan's identity, nationally and internationally.

²⁹ The 'Economic Miracle' is a phrase that refers to Taiwan's rapid industrial development and its high economic performance during and after the 1970s which triggered a significant rise of income and living standards in the 1980s. See Denis Fred Simon and Michael Kau (eds.), *Taiwan Beyond the Economic Miracle*, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 1992; and Thomas B. Gold, *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle*, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 1986.

³⁰ See for example: Hung-mao Tien, *The Great Transition: Political and Social Change in the Republic of China*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, 1989; Alan M. Wachman, *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization*, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 1994; Shelley Rigger, *Politics in Taiwan: Voting for Democracy*, Routledge, London, 1999; Edwin Winkler and Susan Greenhalgh (eds.), *Contending Approaches to the Political Economy of Taiwan*, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 1988; Richard Louis Edmonds and Steven M. Goldstein (eds.), *Taiwan in the Twentieth Century: A Retrospective View*, *The China Quarterly*, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

³¹ For example, John Makeham and A-chin Hsiao (eds.), *Cultural, Ethnic, and Political Nationalism in Contemporary Taiwan – Bentuhua*, Palgrave and Macmillan, New York, Hampshire, 2005; A-chin Hsiao, *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism*, 2000.

³² For example, Jason C. Kuo, 'Painters of the Postwar Generation in Taiwan', in *Cultural Change in Postwar Taiwan*, Steven Harrell and Huang Chun-chieh (eds.), SMC Publishing, Taipei, 1994, pp.246-275; Felix Schöeber 'Re-writing Art in Taiwan: Secularism, Universalism, Globalisation, or Modernity and the Aesthetic Object', in *Re-Writing Culture in Taiwan*, Fang-long Shih, Stuart Thompson and Paul-François Tremlett (eds.), Routledge, Oxon, 2009, pp.154-181.

³³ Hsiao, *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism*, 2000, p.3. In another article, Hsiao refers by name only to two artists, Ju Ming and Hong Tong practising during the 1970s. Hsiao, 'The Indigenization of Taiwanese Literature', in *Cultural, Ethnic, and Political Nationalism*, 2005, p.128.

Taiwan's identity discourse is multifaceted and fluid, involving diverse and competing ideas and beliefs that revolve around the idea of the 'Taiwan nation', and intersect historical, ethnic, socio-political, economic, and cultural domains. Given the diversity of views on the definition and meaning of national identity in Taiwan, a clarification of the terms 'Taiwanese' and 'Taiwan consciousness' is essential, as is a brief historical overview of some of the defining moments in this identity trajectory from the late 1980s until 2010.

While many people recognise that the naming of Taiwan is challenged by the Chinese government,³⁴ fewer are aware the term 'Taiwanese', as a form of identification, is equally contested in Taiwan, and was the subject of significant debate which became divisive during the early-mid 1990s.³⁵ Based on the proposition that national difference denotes ethnic and cultural difference, during the 1990s the term Taiwanese was used to identify and distinguish people or things, including art, deemed local or 'native' to Taiwan, in contrast to that which was viewed as foreign or 'Other', which generally implied China or Euro-America. The term was often employed to denote a sense of political loyalty and ethnic and cultural pride as well as belonging to Taiwan, as distinct from China; and often, though not always, to indicate an individual's support for Taiwan independence. In this thesis I use the term 'Taiwanese' both intentionally and cautiously, to emphasise a person's political and cultural identification with Taiwan, and also to acknowledge the *idea* of ethnic and cultural difference. Otherwise, I use more neutral phrases such as 'art from Taiwan' rather than 'Taiwanese art' or 'Taiwan art' which foreground the nation. To understand the significance of the term and how it was employed in visual art discourse, it is necessary to briefly examine its ethnic and political dimensions.

³⁴ The naming of Taiwan in international events, such as the Olympics, often attracts international media attention when a dispute develops between the governments of Taiwan and China, since the latter insists Taiwan should be named Taipei, China. The issue of naming Taiwan is discussed further in Chapter One.

³⁵ The term, 'Taiwanese' has many variants including 'Taiwanese' (local person) (*bendiren* or *benshengren*); 'Taiwanisation' (*bentuhua*); and 'Taiwanese consciousness' (*bentu yishi*).

In Taiwan, there are four key 'ethnic'³⁶ groups: Hakka (客家),³⁷ Hoklo (河洛),³⁸ Mainlanders (外省) and aboriginals (原住民).³⁹ The aboriginals are of Malayo-Polynesian or Austronesian descent⁴⁰ which, for administrative purposes, are generally classified as one group, although they may also identify as Taiwanese and Chinese.⁴¹ Conversely, the Hakka, Hoklo and Mainlanders are of Han-Chinese descent and are not indigenous to Taiwan. During the 1990s there were competing claims amongst these three groups about who was Taiwanese or *benshengren* (本省人) (literally, 'of this province people') as distinct from the *waishengren* (外省人) (i.e. the Chinese Mainlanders, or literally 'outside province people') referring to people and their children born on the Mainland.⁴² The most common point of differentiation was based on when a

³⁶ There is some debate about the term 'ethnicity'. Given the Hakka, Hoklo and Mainlanders all originally came from China some scholars prefer to use the term 'sub-ethnicity'. However, anthropologists and other scholars have used the term to denote political and cultural distinctions (real or not) between these three groups and it is in this context it is used in this thesis. See for example, Hill Gates, 'Ethnicity and Social Class', in *The Anthropology of Taiwanese Society*, Emily M. Ahern and Hill Gates (eds.), Stanford University Press, 1981; Melissa J. Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese?: the Impact of Culture, Power, and Migration on Changing Identities*, University of California Press, 2004; Rigger, *Politics in Taiwan*, 1999; Wachman, *Taiwan: National Identity*, 1994, pp.56-90. In Taiwan's Constitution the term 'ethnic group' (族群) is increasingly used e.g., Hakka Ethnic Group (客家族群).

³⁷ The Hakka (*Keijiaren*) migrated from southern China and comprise approximately fifteen per cent of Taiwan's population. In Cantonese Hakka means 'guest' and they are often viewed, even in China, as having their own culture. Acknowledging these differences Taiwan's government established a Hakka Affairs Council in 2001. See <http://www.hakka.gov.tw/mp.asp?mp=11> (accessed 26/2/2012).

³⁸ The Hoklo (*Holo* or *Minnanren*) (also translated in Taiwan as 福佬) comprise approximately seventy per cent of Taiwan's population. They came from Fujian province and many intermarried with the aboriginals. For official information on the two groups see <http://www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/5-gp/yearbook/ch02.pdf> (accessed 26/2/2012 - this site has since been removed).

³⁹ Aboriginals comprise approximately two per cent of Taiwan's population. There are in fact fourteen different tribes (which are officially recognised) and these include the Amis, Atayal, Paiwan, Bunun, Tsou, Rukai, Puyuma, Saisiyat, Yami, Tao, Kavalan, Truku, Sakizaya, and Sediq. I use the term 'aboriginal' rather than 'indigenous' because the former is the preferred translation given by the Alliance of Taiwan Aborigines.

⁴⁰ For further discussion on the term 'Austronesia' see Chapter One pp.60-61.

⁴¹ They are viewed as ethnically separate, but sometimes are combined with the other three groups e.g. 'Four Great Ethnic Groups'.

⁴² The use of the word 'province' here denotes the fact that Taiwan has been regarded, both within Taiwan (and especially by the KMT) and outside Taiwan (by China and the international community) as a province of China.

person (or ancestors) arrived in Taiwan – before or after 1945 – which is when Japan relinquished its claim on Taiwan and the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, 國民黨, hereafter KMT) began to arrive in Taiwan. It is widely reported that the Hakka and Hoklo settled on the island before or during the period of Dutch occupation (1624-1662).⁴³ Some scholars argue that, because they have been living on the island for centuries, cut-off from China, intermixed with the aboriginals, and experienced Japanese colonial rule (1895-1945), these two groups have developed their own social and cultural mores, distinguishing them from the Chinese Mainlanders, or *waishengren*.⁴⁴ This claim has wide support amongst the Hakka and Hoklo who have often been categorised as Taiwanese. There are multiple interpretations of what it means to be a 'Taiwanese' person, just as there are in China in relation to being 'Chinese'.⁴⁵ Writing in a Taiwan context, Stéphane Corcuff emphasises that ethnicity is not only determined by one's place of origin and dialect. It is based

⁴³ Some Han Chinese arrived in Taiwan during the Ming period (1368-1644) but most arrived came during the Qing (1644-1911). Evidence shows that by 1649 there was a Chinese population of 11,339 men and 838 women. Given the disproportionate number of Chinese (and Dutch) men to women, intermarriage with aboriginals was common. After 1895 the Japanese banned Chinese immigration and in 1945 the ban was lifted. Melissa J. Brown (ed.), 'On Becoming Chinese', in *Negotiating Ethnicities in China and Taiwan*, Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1996, pp.47-64; Johannes Huber, 'Chinese Settlers Against the Dutch East India Company: The Rebellion led by Kuo Huai-i on Taiwan in 1652', in *Development and the Decline of Fukien Province in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Eduard B. Vermeer (ed.), E.J Brill, Leiden, 1990, pp.265-96.

⁴⁴ Given these two groups came from the south of China as distinct from the north, some scholars argue these differences were manifest before they arrived in Taiwan. See Harry Lamley, 'Sub-ethnic Rivalry in the Ch'ing Period', in *The Anthropology of Taiwanese Society*, Emily M. Ahern and Hill Gates (eds.), Stanford University Press, 1981, pp.284-292; Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese?*, 2004, pp.7-13. On ethno-linguistic differences see Henning Klöter, 'Re-Writing Language in Taiwan', *Re-Writing Culture*, 2009, pp.106-109. For an opposing view see 'The Evolution of the KMT's Stance on the One China Principle: National Identity in Flux', in *Taiwanese Identity in the Twenty-first Century*, 2011, p.52. Wu argues that Taiwan is a province of China, and that Taiwan's history is part of China's history of exploration and migration.

⁴⁵ This would certainly apply to the Uyghur people, the Tibetans and other minority peoples in China. To 'be Chinese' is in part based on one's ancestral home or province, but it has broader political and cultural implications. See Helen F. Siu, 'Cultural Identity and the Politics of Difference in South China', *Daedalus*, vol. 122, no. 2, Spring 1993, pp.19-43 (particularly p.22).

on a shared *perception* of identity, and is a form of self-identification and, in this thesis, the terms 'ethnicity' and 'Taiwanese' derive from this definition.⁴⁶

The Mainlanders retreated to Taiwan from China between 1945 and 1949 and arrived with Chiang Kai-shek (or Jiang Jieshi 蔣介石)⁴⁷ and his KMT Army which had been defeated by the Chinese Communists. The KMT viewed Taiwan as a temporary base from which they believed they would re-take Mainland China. Given many of these Mainlanders who came to Taiwan were affiliated with the KMT, at least ideologically, the Taiwanese have traditionally associated them with the KMT's policies, which, during the first twenty-five years of rule, were authoritarian and discriminated against the *benshengren*.⁴⁸ The '2/28 incident' which occurred on 28 February 1947 (二二八事件)⁴⁹ when the KMT murdered thousands of innocent *benshengren* has become a powerful and enduring symbol of KMT oppression. It has been widely commemorated in exhibitions and in the 2/28 Memorial Museum which opened in 1997 on the fiftieth anniversary of this event in Taipei. Tensions developed between the *benshengren* and *waishengren* which were effectively suppressed until the rise of democratisation and Taiwanisation⁵⁰ in the 1980s when issues of ethnicity

⁴⁶ Corcuff (ed.), 'Taiwan's "Mainlanders", New Taiwanese?', in *Memories of the Future: National Identity Issues in the Search of Taiwan*, Stéphane Corcuff (ed.), M.E. Sharpe, New York, 2002, pp.167-168.

⁴⁷ Chiang Kai-shek is also known as Jiang Zhongzheng (蔣中正).

⁴⁸ Studies have shown that younger generations of *waishengren* descent but who were born and raised in Taiwan do not necessarily support the KMT, and often identify as Taiwanese or Taiwanese-Chinese. For further information on changing conceptions of identity see: Liu I-chou and Ho Szu-yin, 'The Taiwanese/Chinese Identity of the Taiwan People', *Issues and Studies* 35, no: 3, May/June 1999, pp.1-34; Corcuff (ed.), 'Taiwan's "Mainlanders", New Taiwanese?', in *Memories of the Future*, 2002, pp.167-169; Shelley Rigger, 'Competing Conceptions of Taiwan's Identity: The Irresolvable Conflict in Cross-Strait Relations', *Journal of Contemporary China*, no. 15, July 1997, pp.307-317; Wu Nai-teh, 麵包與愛情: 初探台灣民眾民族認同的變動 ('Romance and Bread: A Preliminary Study of the Identity Change in Taiwan'), *臺灣政治學刊 (Taiwanese Political Science Review)*, vol. 9, issue 2, Dec. 2005, pp. 5-37 (in Chinese).

⁴⁹ The '2/28 incident' is also known as the '2/28 Uprising' and the '2/28 massacre'. For more information on this event and its effects on national identity discourses see Chapter One p.83.

⁵⁰ This term 'Taiwanisation' (*bentuhua* 本土化) is further discussed in Chapter One pp.54-59.

and national identity were foregrounded in political and cultural debates in Taiwan.⁵¹

Artists Yang Mao-lin (楊茂林) and Wu Mali (吳瑪悌),⁵² both of whom were born in Taiwan in the 1950s and identify as *benshengren*, vividly recall the effects of KMT rule prior to the lifting of martial law. As discussed in Chapters Four and Five, in the late 1980s they were involved in the democratisation movement, and supported the opposition pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (民主進步黨, hereafter DPP). It is the contention of this thesis that this generation, which experienced the effects of martial law, was more emotionally invested in this identity debate than their younger counterparts who grew up during the post-martial law period when the processes of democratisation were already well underway. Members of the post-martial law generation, such as artist Yao Jui-chung (姚瑞中), are more likely to be of mixed Taiwanese-Chinese (*bensheng-waisheng*) heritage,⁵³ and their views on identity are generally less fixed or oppositional than some of their older peers.⁵⁴ This thesis demonstrates how generational change, globalisation, and the rise of China have radically altered perceptions of identity in Taiwan, which became increasingly transnational and cosmopolitan by the early twenty-first century.

In the decade immediately following the lifting of martial law, the desire to establish a Taiwan nation and define a distinctive cultural identity intensified, particularly after 1996 when the Chinese government launched unarmed missiles into Taiwan's sea-zone in an attempt to intimidate Taiwanese pro-

⁵¹ Wachman, *Taiwan: National Identity*, 1994, p.6; Chen Wen-chun, 'National Identity and Democratic Consolidation in Taiwan: A Study of the Problem of Democratisation in a Divided Country', *Issues and Studies*, vol. 33, no. 4, April 1997, pp.1-44.

⁵² See Chapters Three and Five for more information on these two artists' backgrounds.

⁵³ Meaning one parent was born in Mainland China and the other was born in Taiwan.

⁵⁴ This is discussed further in Chapter Six on Yao Jui-chung.

independence supporters.⁵⁵ During this period, notions of self-identity were conflated with political issues regarding Taiwan's identity *vis-à-vis* China, raising questions about an individual's ethnicity⁵⁶ and the extent to which they *belonged* to Taiwan. In interviews conducted in 1995, for example, some local artists would voluntarily introduce themselves to me by their Taiwanese ethnicity (i.e. Hakka or Hoklo), and declare their support for Taiwan independence, if not national self-determination.⁵⁷ The aforementioned term *bentu yishi* (Taiwan consciousness) was a popular catchphrase used to indicate one's awareness of the uniqueness of Taiwan's culture and history; it was employed by local artists to convey a sense of belonging to Taiwan. For example, Chen Shun-chu (陳順築), an urbane and widely respected photographer from Taiwan, explained to me how his work depicting a barren landscape and a derelict house was emblematic of *bentu yishi* because, in his view, its subject and the ways he visually represented it, conceptually and aesthetically, were quintessentially Taiwanese. He legitimised his claim by the fact that he was born and raised in Taiwan (and specifically on the island of Penghu) and defined himself as a *benshengren* (Taiwanese).⁵⁸ What compels an artist to make such a statement; and what does it mean to have Taiwan consciousness? These are some of the key questions underpinning this research.

⁵⁵ For more information on the impact of this Chinese missile strike near Taiwan, and on former President Lee Teng-hui's role in the rise of national identity consciousness, see Chapter One p.58.

⁵⁶ That is whether they were ethnically defined as Taiwanese/*benshengren* (Hakka, Hoklo) or Mainlander (*waishengren*) as discussed earlier in this Introduction.

⁵⁷ Self-determination is understood here as the ability to exercise free will and determine the country's future development, including its cultural priorities, without necessarily achieving national sovereignty. Independence, on the other hand, is defined in relation to self-rule and national sovereignty, which the DPP advocated but which is becoming less popular in Taiwan as people seek to maintain the *status quo* with China. According to the anthropologist Hill Gates, this mode of introduction was common in the early 1980s at social gatherings. Gates, *The Anthropology of Taiwanese Society*, 1981, p.254.

⁵⁸ Chen Shun-chu, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei. Penghu (澎湖), which is also known as Pescadores, is an archipelago located off the west coast of mainland Taiwan.

The rise of Taiwan consciousness

The term *bentu yishi* (本土意識) is complex as it has multiple meanings and translations but, in its most inclusive and literal form, it is translated as an 'awareness of this earth' (i.e. Taiwan).⁵⁹ During the early-mid 1990s the term was widely used as a means by which an individual would distinguish him/herself politically, culturally and ethnically as being 'from Taiwan'. The meaning and significance of the term engendered impassioned debate, not only in visual art but also in literature, film, music and education.⁶⁰ In a cultural context, Taiwan consciousness related to the idea that Taiwan's local and indigenous traditions and practices had been suppressed or censored during thirty-eight years of martial law and needed to be rehabilitated and acknowledged. It indicates a recognition and appreciation of the historically and culturally distinctive characteristics of Taiwan society. What these characteristics are, and the extent to which they are unique to Taiwan is a matter for conjecture. It depends largely on one's political and cultural perspective of Taiwan's relationship with China, and whether Taiwan's identity is Chinese or Austronesian, a synthesis of both, and may include Japanese and Western influence. In this thesis I employ the art historian, Jason

⁵⁹ *Bentu yishi* can also be translated as 'native consciousness', 'local consciousness', 'Taiwanese consciousness' or 'homeland consciousness'. In this thesis I most often use the term 'Taiwan consciousness' because it more accurately reflects the national scope and character of the debate on *bentu yishi*. In some instances I use 'Taiwanese consciousness' or 'native consciousness' when seeking to emphasise the ethnic, Taiwanese nationalist dimensions of this debate.

⁶⁰ For example, (on literature see) Hsiao, *Cultural, Ethnic, and Political Nationalism*, 2005, pp.125-159; Angelina C. Yee, 'Constructing Native Consciousness: Taiwan Literature in the 20th Century', in *Taiwan in the Twentieth Century*, 2001, pp.83-101; (on literature and film) June Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan, Fiction, Cinema and the Nation*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2004, pp.39-68; (on film) Chris Berry, 'Re-Writing Cinema: Markets, Languages, Cultures in Taiwan', in *Re-Writing Culture*, 2009, pp.140-153; (on music) Lin Sylvia Li-chun, 'Toward a New Identity: Nativism and Popular Music in Taiwan', *China Information*, vol.17, 2003, pp. 83-107. DOI:10.1177/0920203X0301700204 (accessed 28/6/2010); (on education) Shan Wen-jing, 台灣中小學公民教育與(台灣人)意識的型塑 ('Taiwan's Secondary and Elementary Civic Education and the Shaping of "Taiwanese" Consciousness'), 教育資料集刊 (*Educational Information Resource Journal*), no. 25, Nov. 2000, pp. 48-63 (in Chinese); Fu-chang Wang, 'Why Bother about School Textbooks?: An Analysis of the Origin of Disputes over *Renshi Taiwan* Textbooks in 1997', in *Cultural, Ethnic, and Political Nationalism*, 2005, pp.55-99. For a general overview of the origins and cultural impact of Taiwan consciousness see Hsiao, *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism*, 2000.

C. Kuo's 'working definition' of Taiwan consciousness defined as: 'self-confidence on the part of the artists in the possibility of creating an art that embodies that [unique] way of life in Taiwan'.⁶¹ Although Kuo views Taiwan's cultural origins as Chinese rather than Austronesian as some Taiwanese nationalists advocate, both sides nevertheless emphasise the importance of Taiwan's history in the development of Taiwan consciousness.

The extensive literature on the historical development of Taiwanese identity consciousness has, for the purposes of this discussion, been condensed into three defining episodes: the period of Japanese colonisation; the first two decades of KMT rule; and the 1970s when the seeds of democratisation and Taiwanisation were sown. These particular historical episodes often arise in visual art discourse, and are referred to throughout this thesis.

Although the exact origins of Taiwan consciousness are contested, Japanese occupation (1895-1945) is widely regarded as a formative period when a 'pan-Taiwanese identity' emerged amongst the Hakka and Hoklo who, scholars claim, had not previously demonstrated a strong sense of ethnic cohesion.⁶² During the fifty years of Japanese colonisation the Hakka and Hoklo were inducted into Japanese language and culture.⁶³ However, the Japanese

⁶¹ Jason C. Kuo, 'After the Empire: The Postwar Generation of Painters', in *Art and Cultural Politics in Postwar Taiwan*, University of Washington Press, 2000, p.138. Kuo uses the term *Taiwanese* consciousness which he translates as *Taiwan yishi* (*Taiwan i-shih*).

⁶² When the Qing rulers ceded Taiwan to Japan in 1895, as part of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, the Han Chinese on the island formed a united front against the Japanese, establishing a Taiwan Republic. Although short lived, the Taiwan Republic has been described as Taiwan's first independence movement and some scholars claim it signified the emergence of a 'pan-Taiwanese' identity. On the ethnic dimensions of this debate see: Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese?*, 2004, p.8; Lamley, *The Anthropology of Taiwanese Society*, 1981, pp.284-292. On the event see: George H. Kerr, *Formosa: Licensed Revolution and the Home Rule Movement, 1895-1945*, University Press of Hawai'i, Honolulu, 1974; Andrew Morris, 'The Taiwan Republic of 1895 and the Failure of the Qing Modernising Project', in *Memories of the Future*, 2002, pp.3-24. According to Goddard, the idea for this Republic was instigated by a group of artists and poets who belonged to the Peony Poets Club. W.G. Goddard 'The First Asian Republic', in *Formosa*, Michigan State University Press, 1966, p.145.

⁶³ For more information on the effects of the Japanese colonial rule in education and their policies of cultural assimilation see: Patricia Tsurumi, *Japanese Colonial Education in Taiwan, 1895-1945*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, London, 1977; and 'Mental Captivity and

government's assimilation policies, coupled with the paradoxical sense of belonging to and abandonment by China, engendered an identity crisis amongst these Han-Chinese on the island. This was evoked in the seminal novel by Wu Chuo-liu (吳濁流) poignantly titled *Orphan of Asia*,⁶⁴ written prior to the KMT's arrival and foreshadowed events that profoundly intensified this identity crisis.

When Japan surrendered Taiwan to Chinese Nationalist forces, the *benshengren* initially welcomed the KMT, signifying Taiwan's return to China, or the Motherland.⁶⁵ However, rampant corruption, inflation, and the aforementioned 2/28 incident radically changed their views and forged tensions between the *benshengren* and the *waishengren*. According to Bruce Jacobs, during this period the very *idea* of Taiwan independence emerged.⁶⁶ Under martial law, the KMT implemented a programme of ideological indoctrination and authoritarian control described as the 'White Terror' (白色恐怖) period,⁶⁷ when political dissidents were imprisoned and labelled Communist 'bandit spies' (匪諜), and (self-)censorship was common

Resistance: Lessons from Taiwanese Anti-colonialism', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, vol. 12, no 2, April-June 1980, pp.2-13; Leo T. S. Ching, *Becoming "Japanese": Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001.

⁶⁴ This book was originally written between 1943 and 1945 in Japanese and was translated into Chinese in 1962. See Wu Chou-liu (also referred to as Wu Zhuoliu), with the assistance of Qiao Li, *Orphan of Asia* (trans.) Ioannis Mentzas, Columbia University Press, New York, 2005. For further discussion of this book in relation to Taiwan's identity discourses see Ching, *Becoming "Japanese"*, 2001, pp.174-211; and Yee, *Taiwan in the Twentieth Century*, 2001, pp.83-101.

⁶⁵ Bruce Jacobs, "'Taiwanization" in Taiwan's Politics', in *Cultural, Ethnic, and Political Nationalism*, 2005, pp.17-18; Harrell and Huang (eds.), in *Cultural Change in Postwar Taiwan*, 1994, pp.14-15; Tien, *The Great Transition*, 1989, p.36.

⁶⁶ Jacobs contends the 'concept of Taiwan independence (only) became an important force' after the 2/28 incident. See Jacobs, in *Cultural, Ethnic, and Political Nationalism*, 2005, p.18.

⁶⁷ The White Terror refers to the KMT's authoritarian control during the 1950s and 1960s but arguably it prevailed throughout the thirty-eight years of martial law (1949-1987). More specifically it relates to the suppression and execution of political dissidents who were believed to be 'bandit spies' working for the Chinese Communists. See Tien, *The Great Transition*, 1989, pp.206-215; Robert Edmondson, 'The February 28 Incident and National Identity', in *Memories of the Future*, 2002, pp.29-31; George H. Kerr, *Formosa Betrayed*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1965; Timothy Wong Ka-ying, *The Rise and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Nationalism*, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2001.

in the arts.⁶⁸ The KMT believed Taiwan's inhabitants had been 'enslaved' and corrupted by Japanese influence, and that it was their duty to re-sinify⁶⁹ them, imposing Chinese cultural values and traditions through language, culture, education, and the media. As a counterpoint to the Chinese Communist Cultural Revolution, in 1966 the KMT launched the Cultural Renaissance Movement (中華文化復興運動)⁷⁰ which promoted the 'authentic' traditional aspects of Chinese culture. It is noteworthy that Taiwan's new KMT government, which seeks to forge closer ties with China, continues to uphold and promote these aspects of Chinese cultural tradition, through language and exhibitions of ink painting and calligraphy.⁷¹ As scholars have demonstrated, for many Taiwanese who had never been to the Mainland, these early years of KMT political and cultural hegemony engendered significant resentment amongst the Taiwanese towards China and the Chinese.⁷²

According to Thomas Gold, who has written extensively on Taiwan's identity, the quest for a unique national identity began in the mid-1970s.⁷³ Paradoxically, the international community's de-recognition of Taiwan as a

⁶⁸ Artists in Taiwan have anecdotes about the effects of censorship in art. For example, they describe how they were unable to use the colour red because it signified Communist China; nor were they permitted to paint state buildings, such as the Presidential Palace, at sunset because it was viewed as an allusion to the decline of the political power of the KMT. One artist who wrote the Chinese character Chiang (as in Chiang Kai-shek) upside down also purportedly disappeared. Based on the author's interviews with Tsong Pu and Mei Dean-E, 1995, Taipei.

⁶⁹ This term is a derivation of sinicization (*Zhongguohua*) meaning 'Chineseness' and is distinguished from the term 'Taiwanisation' (*bentuhua*). However, some scholars define 'sinicization' as 'indigenisation' or 'localisation' because China was regarded, at least officially, as local until the 1990s. See for example Maukuei Chang (Chang Mau-kuei), 'The Movement to Indigenize the Social Sciences in Taiwan: Origin and Predicaments', in *Cultural, Ethnic, and Political Nationalism*, 2005, pp.221-260.

⁷⁰ For more information on the Cultural Renaissance Movement and the effects of KMT rule on culture in Taiwan see Murray Rubinstein, Chou Bi-Her and Joseph Bosco, *The Other Taiwan: 1945 to the Present*, M.E. Sharpe, 1994; Warren Tozer, 'Taiwan's "Cultural Renaissance": A Preliminary View', *The China Quarterly*, no.43, July-September 1970, pp.81-99; Edwin Winkler, 'Cultural Policy on Postwar Taiwan', in *Cultural Change in Postwar Taiwan*, 1994, pp.29-31.

⁷¹ This is discussed further in Chapter Eight.

⁷² See Wachman, 1994; Hui-ching Chang (Chang Hui-ching) and Richard Holt, 'Symbols in Conflict: Taiwan (Taiwan) and *Zhongguo* (China) in Taiwan's Identity Politics', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol. 13, 2007, pp.129-165. DOI: 10.1080/13537110601155841 (accessed 7/10/2010).

⁷³ Thomas B. Gold, 'Civil Society and Taiwan's Quest for Identity', in *Cultural Change in Postwar Taiwan*, 1994, p.61.

member of the UN in 1971 conferred legitimacy on the idea of a separate *Taiwanese* identity and, as one economist states, it engendered a 'cultural attitude of self-reliance'.⁷⁴ During this period, Taiwan underwent a period of rapid economic modernisation and industrialisation, culminating in the 'Economic Miracle'. A new middle class emerged and the number of commercial galleries grew, thus establishing the foundations of a local art market.⁷⁵ Although the KMT maintained its claim as the representative government of China, in society there was a growing awareness that Taiwan's destiny and identity were no longer defined by China. By the end of the 1970s, an emergent opposition *tangwai* movement (黨外) exerted pressure on the government to democratise Taiwan, and several members of this movement became part of the DPP opposition party in the 1980s.⁷⁶ Culturally, the Homeland (*hsiang-tu* 鄉土) arts movement⁷⁷ reflected this growing socio-political awareness, and writers, intellectuals and some artists turned their attention to the realities of Taiwan and its environment. This increased sense of self-reliance, local consciousness and national pride ultimately laid the foundations for the formation of a new *Taiwanese* nation.

Re-writing Taiwan's identity in art: an overview of sources

The nexus between the past and the present is crucial to understanding Taiwan's identity, and the re-writing of Taiwan's history is a key feature of this discourse. After the lifting of martial law, subjects once considered taboo, such as the 2/28 incident, became a focus of cultural and scholarly attention in

⁷⁴ John C.H. Fei, 'The Taiwan Economy in the Seventies', in *Chiang Ching-Kuo's Leadership in the Development of the Republic of China on Taiwan*, Leng Shao-chuan (ed.), vol.3, Miller Centre & University of Virginia, University Press of America, 1993, p.63.

⁷⁵ According to Hsieh Li-fa between 1971-1976 the number of galleries increased from 'three or four' to approximately twenty-five. Hsieh Li-fa, 'From Salon to Museum', in *Twentieth Century Taiwanese Paintings*, vol. 1, Oriental Healing Arts Institution, California, 1983, p.20. It is noteworthy that in his discussion on the 1970s Hung defines artists as 'professionals', along with lawyers, physicians, architects and accountants who he says constituted Taiwan's new middle class. Tien, *The Great Transition*, 1989, p.33.

⁷⁶ The *tangwai* is translated in Chinese pinyin as *dangwai*. For more information on the rise of this movement see Chapter Four pp. 197-198.

⁷⁷ The 'Homeland' movement is also referred to as the 'Grassroots' movement and, in Chinese pinyin, *xiangtu*.

Taiwan. This upsurge of interest in Taiwan's history is evidenced by the rise of Taiwan Studies, which has become a distinct academic discipline offered in universities in Taiwan as well as overseas.⁷⁸ Writing on its epistemological and ideological dimensions, Mark Harrison describes the emergence of Taiwan Studies as a 'key moment in the articulation of a Taiwanese identity' and he also argues that, by foregrounding Taiwan as a discrete geopolitical and cultural entity and highlighting the distinctiveness of its history, this literature implicitly promotes and legitimises Taiwan's independent national identity.⁷⁹ Certainly, in the re-writing of Taiwan's history in the art field, this ideological agenda was most apparent at the height of Taiwanese nationalism in the early to mid-1990s.

This Taiwan Studies Fever, as it is popularly described, significantly impacted on the art field and, during the 1990s, museums, including the TFAM, presented a vast range of exhibitions and retrospectives which visually mapped Taiwan's historical trajectory. In conjunction with these exhibitions, catalogues and artist monographs were published which comprised essays by academics, artists, and critics examining Taiwan's history from prehistoric times until the present day.⁸⁰ Taiwan's two most established and widely circulated art magazines, *Lion Art* (*Hsiung shih meishu* 雄獅美術)⁸¹ and *Artist*

⁷⁸ The Academia Sinica in Taiwan also established an institute that was devoted to Taiwan Studies. Overseas, Taiwan Studies centres are generally financially supported by the Taiwan government through its Ministry of Education. In Australia the numbers of these centres are growing. See Philippa Riley, 'Taiwan Studies in Australia', *East Asian Library Resources Group of Australia Newsletter*, no. 55, Jan. 2010, http://www.ealrga.org.au/newsletter1001/1001_riley.html (accessed 30/2/2012).

⁷⁹ Harrison, *Legitimacy, Meaning and Knowledge*, 2006, pp.14-15.

⁸⁰ A selection of these include *Retrospective Exhibition of Early Western Art* (1990) and *Taiwan Art (1945-1993)* (1993) presented by the TFAM; and *Retrospective Exhibition of Painting Development in Taiwan (1739-1980)*, presented by the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, in 1994. In addition there were numerous artist retrospectives (including Chen Cheng-po, Liu Chin-tang, and Chen Hui-kun) and collection exhibitions focusing on Taiwan's history.

⁸¹ *Lion Art* is also referred to as *Lion Art Monthly* (and in Chinese pinyin as *Xiongshi meishu*). In addition to publishing an art magazine, Lion Art Publishing (雄獅美術出版社) also produces books – all published in Chinese. The company was founded in 1971 but closed in 1996. In 2011 it was re-launched as an online periodical and art database.

(Yishujia 藝術家),⁸² both of which are published in Chinese, also played important roles in raising public awareness about Taiwan's history and identity.⁸³ These historical narratives were generally chronological, descriptive, and often polemical, infused with Taiwanese nationalist sentiment. They nevertheless offer valuable visual and textual evidence of the extent of interest in Taiwan's history and identity, and of the different perspectives and ways it was envisioned in art.

There are several independent scholars in Taiwan and overseas who have analysed the historical development of identity in Taiwan art from more analytical and less politically partial perspectives. A significant amount of this literature focuses on the period from the 1930s until the 1980s, and especially on the period of Japanese colonisation, which is widely viewed in the art field as a critical period when Taiwan's pioneering first generation artists emerged. Artists and writers Wang Bai-yuan (王白淵) and Hsieh Li-fa (謝里法) wrote the first accounts of this period⁸⁴ and, since this time, academics including Yen

⁸² *Artist* magazine was launched in 1975 by Artist Publishing which also produces books.

⁸³ From the early-mid 1970s *Lion Art* began publishing a series of 'special reports' on the Japanese-trained local artists, including Chen Cheng-po, Yang San-lang, Li Shih-chiao, Li Mei-shu and Liu Chin-tang. See for example *Lion Art* issues in October 1971, February 1973, April and June 1974. In 1992 *Artist* launched the *Taiwan Fine Arts Series* (台灣美術全集) which comprises ten volumes and focused on the historical development of Taiwan art, and particularly local artists who lived through the period of Japanese occupation. The first of these was a monograph focusing on the artist Chen Cheng-po whose works featured concurrently in a retrospective exhibition at the TFAM. See *Taiwan Fine Art Series 1, Artist*, 1992, Taipei. In addition, *Artist* published a series of books including 藝術家 <> 臺灣美術 (*Artists and Taiwan Art*) in 1995 which reviewed art developments during the last twenty years (in Chinese); and in 2000 *Waves Striking: One Hundred years of Taiwanese Arts* (千濤拍岸: 台灣美術一百年圖錄) in 2000 which included six essays (in Chinese and English) that explored different aspects of Taiwan's history and identity.

⁸⁴ One of the first surveys written on the 'new art' pioneered by Japanese-educated artists in Taiwan was by Wang Bai-yuan (also known as Wang Yi-gang) entitled 台灣美術運動史 (*History of Taiwan's Art Movements*), 台北文物 (*Taipei Wenwu*), vol. 3, no. 4, 1955 pp.16-65 (in Chinese). Hsieh Li-fa's accounts were published as a series of essays in *Artist* from 1975 to 1977 and later appeared in 日據時代臺灣美術運動史 (*History of Fine Arts Movements in Taiwan during the Japanese Occupation*), Yishujia Publishing, Taipei, 1978, (3rd. ed. 1992) (in Chinese). For an abridged English version, see Hsieh, *The Twentieth Century Taiwanese Paintings*, 1983.

Chuan-ying (顏娟英),⁸⁵ Wang Hsiu-hsiung (王秀雄),⁸⁶ and Liao Hsin-tien (廖新田)⁸⁷ in particular, as well as John Clark,⁸⁸ and Yuko Kikuchi⁸⁹ have written in-depth and expansive histories of this period. This literature examines the cultural effects of Japanese colonisation on art education and exhibition display, and the aesthetic influences of Japanese-mediated Western Impressionism on individual artists' works, which scholars claim captured Taiwan's 'local colour' and reflected a 'Taiwanese sentiment'.⁹⁰

The first two and a half decades of KMT rule, especially from the mid-1950s when the Eastern (*Tung-fang hua-hui* 東方畫會) and Fifth Moon (*Wu-yue hua-*

⁸⁵ Yen Chuan-ying (Yan Juanying), is a leading scholar who has written widely on this subject. She wrote a seminal book entitled 風景心境: 台灣近代美術文獻導讀 (*Landscape Moods: Selected Readings in Modern Taiwanese Art*) published in 2001 by Lion Art. This book, which focuses on art during the Japanese colonial period, is a key text for university students and academics studying this subject. Other selected texts by Yen and published in English include: 'The Art Movement of the 1930s in Taiwan', in *Modernity in Asian Art*, 1993; 'Regulated Space and the Pursuit of Knowledge: Modern Art in Colonial Taiwan', in *Contemporary Taiwanese Art in the Era of Contention*, 2004, pp.10-41.

⁸⁶ Wang Hsiu-hsiung, 台灣美術發展史論 (*A Discussion of the Historical Development of Taiwan Art*), National Museum of History, Taipei, 1995 (in Chinese); 'The Development of the Official Art Exhibition in Taiwan during the Japanese Occupation: A Study on Style, Mass Media and Art Criticism', in *Symposium on "The Artistic Trends in the R.O.C."*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 1992 pp.328-330 (in Chinese with an English summary); and 'The Development of Official Art Exhibitions in Taiwan During the Japanese Occupation', in *War, Occupation and Creativity: Japan and East Asia 1920-1960*, Marlene J. Mayo, J. Thomas Rimer, H. Eleanor Kerkham (eds.), University of Hawai'i Press, 2001, pp.92-120.

⁸⁷ Liao Hsin-tien, *Colonialism, Post-colonialism and Local Identity in Colonial Taiwanese Landscape Paintings (1908-1945)*, PhD thesis, University of Central England, 2002; 'The Beauty of the Untamed: Exploration and Travel in Colonial Taiwanese Landscape Painting', in *Refracted Modernity: Visual Culture and Identity in Colonial Taiwan*, Yuko Kikuchi (ed.), University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 2007.

⁸⁸ John Clark, 'Taiwanese Painting under the Japanese Occupation', *Journal of Oriental Studies*, vol. 25, no.1, 1987, pp. 63-104. John Clark has also written on artistic developments post-WWII, mainly from a socio-political perspective. For example, see: 'Taiwanese Painting and Europe: Direct and Indirect Relations', in *China and Europe in the Twentieth Century*, Yu Ming-shaw (ed.), Institute of International Relations, National Chengchi University, Taipei, 1986, pp.43-60; and 'Painting in Taiwan after 1945: A Political and Economic Background', *Yishu: Journal of Chinese Contemporary Art*, vol.2, no.1, March 2003, pp.62-76; *Modernities of Chinese Art*, Brill, Leiden, 2010.

⁸⁹ Yuko Kikuchi (Kikuchi, Yuko), edited an important book on Japanese colonialism, identity and culture in Taiwan. See Yuko Kikuchi (ed.), *Refracted Modernity*, 2007.

⁹⁰ Liao Hsin-tien, 'Blurring the "Local Colour" Discourses in Taiwanese Landscape Painting, the 1930s-1940s', paper presented at the Eighth Annual North America Taiwan Studies Conference, *Power, Knowledge Production, and Agency: Towards a Critical Taiwan Studies*, Iowa, 2002.

hui 五月畫會) art groups formed, have also attracted scholarly attention. Art historians, including Hsiao Chong-ray (蕭瓊瑞)⁹¹ and Li Chu-ting (李鑄晉),⁹² have conducted extensive research on the Eastern and Fifth Moon artists who sought to expand the borders of cultural legitimacy by proposing to synthesise traditional Chinese painting with abstract elements derived from Western modern art. American-based scholar, Jason C. Kuo has written extensively on the relationship between identity politics and art in debates about the orthodoxy of Chinese national-style painting (*guohua* 國畫).⁹³ Edwin Winkler and one of Taiwan's long-serving museum directors, Huang Tsai-lang (黃才郎), have also researched the role and effects of KMT cultural policy on Taiwan's socio-cultural development, and on museums and artistic production.⁹⁴

In the context of Taiwan's identity discourse, the mid-1970s marked a critical period when local scholars, writers and artists began to focus their attention on Taiwan's local culture and traditions which had been suppressed for decades, and which many believed were now under threat owing to the effects of industrialisation and modernisation. *Lion Art* magazine published a series of

⁹¹ Hsiao Chong-ray (Hsiao Chong-rae/ Hsiao Chiung-jui/ Xiao Qiongrui) has written extensively (mostly in Chinese) on artistic developments during the 1950s and 1960s and he has also written on the Japanese period. His publications include: 五月與東方:中國美術現代化運動在戰後台灣之發展(1945-1970) (*The Fifth Moon Group and the Eastern Art Group: The Development of Chinese Art Modernisation Movement in Postwar Taiwan 1945-1970*), Dongda Publishing, Taipei, 1991 (in Chinese); and 台灣美術史研究論集(*A Collection of Articles on the History of Painting in Taiwan*), Boya, Taichung, 1991 (in Chinese). Also, 'Between Radical and Conservative: A New Look at Post-war Modern Taiwanese Art (1945-1983)' in *Contemporary Taiwanese Art in the Era of Contention*, 2004, pp.42-69.

⁹² Li Chu-ting, 'The Fifth Moon Group of Taiwan', *The Register of the Spencer Museum of Art*, The University of Kansas, vol.6, no.3, 1986, pp.42-54.

⁹³ Kuo, *Art and Cultural Politics in Postwar Taiwan*, 2000; 'Painting, Decolonization and Cultural Politics in Postwar Taiwan', *Arts Orientalis*, vol. 25, University of Michigan, 1995, pp. 73-86; Jason C. Kuo (ed.), 當代台灣繪畫文選 1945-1990 (Essays on Contemporary Taiwanese Painting 1945-1990), 雄獅美術出版社 (Lion Art Publishing), Taipei, 1991 (in Chinese). Also see Liao Hsin-tien, 'The Naming Logic and Imagined Cultural Identity in the "Controversy of the Orthodox Guohua" during the Early Postwar Period in Taiwan (1945-1959): A Micro-analysis of Cultural Politics', *Modern China Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2012, pp.63-113.

⁹⁴ Winkler, in *Cultural Change in Postwar Taiwan*, 1994, pp.22-46; Huang Tsai-lang, 'Taiwan Cultural Policy and its Background in the 50s', in *Symposium on "The Artistic Trends in the ROC"*, 1992, pp.281-283 (in Chinese with an English summary). Also see Chang Kin-tsuei, *A Study of the Influence of Government Policy and Fine Arts Museums*, PhD thesis, New York University, 1997, pp.145-149.

articles on Taiwan aboriginal culture and traditional architecture.⁹⁵ The influences of local folk art and wood-carving techniques were also examined in relation to local artists' works, particularly those by Hong Tong (洪通), Lin Yuan (林淵), and Ju Ming (朱銘). The traditional and illusionary Chinese landscape painting techniques promoted by the KMT were progressively rejected by artists who sought inspiration from Taiwan's grass-roots culture.⁹⁶ This period is widely viewed by art commentators as a precursor to the rise of Taiwan consciousness in the 1990s and has been widely documented in literature on art and the development of identity.⁹⁷

These art historical analyses, surveys, and commentaries (some of which are in English but mostly in Chinese), provide a context for this study.⁹⁸ This literature, however, focuses on the period *prior* to the lifting of martial law. There has been significantly less sustained and in-depth critical analysis, especially in the English language, of developments in contemporary art *after* 1987; and, specifically, on the interrelationship between identity politics, artistic production and museological representation during this period, which is the principal focus of this study. Certainly, with the growth of the museum sector and art market, there have been numerous catalogues, art periodicals and books published on Taiwan's contemporary art developments and, during

⁹⁵ For example, Hsi Te-chin (also Xi Dejin), 台灣民間藝術 ("Taiwan Folk Art"), 雄獅美術出版社 (Lion Art Publishing), Taipei, 1974 (in Chinese). This is discussed further in Jiang Hsun, 'Return to Native Soil - Directions in Taiwanese art in the 1970s', in *Taiwan Art 1945-1993*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 1993, pp.62-70. Jiang Hsun was Chief Editor of *Lion Art* from 1978-1979.

⁹⁶ For example, after returning from America and Paris, Hsi wrote 'My Art and Taiwan' in which he discusses his artistic influences, and in particular the inspiration he gains from Taiwan's 'subtropical sunlight and scenery(...its) temples and the faces of people (which) call me back'. Hsi Te-chin, 我的藝術與台灣 ('My Art and Taiwan'), 雄獅美術 (*Lion Art*), no.2, April 1971, pp.16-17 (in Chinese).

⁹⁷ See for example, Jiang Hsun, 'Return to Native Soil', in *Taiwan Art (1945-1993)*, 1993, pp.62-71; Lu Ching-fu, 'An Examination of Regionalism and Contemporary Trends in Art', in *Symposium on "The Artistic Trends in the ROC"*, 1992, pp.281-283 (in Chinese with an English summary), pp.76-99. For a theoretical analyses of this period see: Liao Hsin-tien, '近鄉情怯：台灣近現代視覺藝術發展中本土意識的三種面貌' ('Hesitating to Approach the Homeland: Three Facets of Native Consciousness in the Development of Modern Taiwan Visual Art'), 文化研究 (*Wenhua Yanjiu*), no. 2, Mar. 2006, (in Chinese).

⁹⁸ Some of these, however, have been translated, or at least summarised, in English.

the 1990s, most of this literature engaged in identity issues. In addition to this material, there has been significant literature published in the last decade written by academics who have examined the influences of identity politics on culture more broadly as I discuss below.

Museums, which have traditionally been education-oriented, have made a significant contribution to research on Taiwan art, publishing exhibition catalogues, artist monographs, conference papers, books and journals, and establishing online databases. With the exception of the catalogues, conference papers and some internet-based information (which are often bilingual or include an English précis), most of this material is in Chinese. The catalogue essays are mainly commentary as the vast majority of contributors adopt a conventional narrative approach focusing on the historical development of Taiwan art and identity, or a particular genre or period. Others examine these developments in a thematic or theoretical framework, focusing on a particular curatorial concept underpinning an exhibition, or on a phenomenon, such as the body or subjectivity, and do not generally focus on the artwork *per se*.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, the TFAM's catalogues and some publications produced by other art museums and galleries have been an important source of visual and textual information in this study. The TFAM's catalogues from exhibitions examined in this thesis have been particularly useful, as a visual record and for more detailed information on the curatorial rationale, and on the museum's, as well government and sponsors' objectives.

From the mid-1990s, Taiwan art became more visible on the international stage, and alongside the many international biennials/triennials which generally featured at least one artist from Taiwan, museums in Euro-America and the Asia-Pacific region also presented exhibitions of Taiwan art, either

⁹⁹ For example, see Hsieh Tung-shan, 'Sexuality and Power', in *1996 Taipei Biennial: The Quest for Identity*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 1996, pp.83-86; Victoria Lu, 'The Vernacular Idioms of Taiwanese Contemporary Art', in *Symposium on "The Artistic Trends in the ROC"*, 1992, pp.189-223 (in Chinese with an English summary).

exclusively or as part of a larger exhibition.¹⁰⁰ While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore in any detail audience responses to these exhibitions held overseas, the catalogues published in conjunction with these exhibitions have been drawn upon to gauge the curators' and essayists' reactions to art from Taiwan.¹⁰¹ These catalogues also shed light on why particular artists' works were chosen to represent Taiwan in these international exhibitions.

Art periodicals, including the aforementioned *Lion Art* and *Artist*, have also published books, articles, interviews and reviews (all in Chinese) focusing on contemporary art, and often exploring identity issues. While there are always exceptions, it would be fair to say that a significant proportion of the literature published during the 1990s on art and identity issues was often descriptive and influenced by the author's own ideological position on Taiwan's identity vis-à-vis China. For example, in 1994, *Lion Art* published the book *Taiwan Consciousness in Taiwan Art* (台灣美術中的台灣意識), an anthology of essays focusing on the meaning of Taiwanese identity in art which provoked considerable debate within Taiwan's art field.¹⁰² However, as this book attests many of the articles and reviews were polemical, supporting or criticising Taiwan nationalism in art, and the authors' political views on Taiwan independence were often implicit. *Art & Collection* (典藏藝術)¹⁰³ and *Chinese*

¹⁰⁰ One of the first international exhibitions of contemporary Taiwan art was *Message from Taipei*, shown in Tokyo in 1989. Subsequent exhibitions included, *Art Taiwan* (Sydney, 1995); *Taiwan: Kunst Heute*, (Germany, 1996); *Tu Parles/ J'écoute* (Paris, 1998); *Face to Face: Contemporary Art from Taiwan* (Brisbane and touring 1999-2000 – see Methodology section). Exhibitions and biennials/triennials also included art from Taiwan *Inside Out: New Chinese Art*, (United States and touring, 1998), and the *AsiaPacific Triennial* (Brisbane, 1996-).

¹⁰¹ This research draws on a selection of media reports and reviews on exhibitions in print and electronic media in Taiwan and overseas; and in interviews artists, curators and critics have offered their opinion of exhibitions. However, it has been impossible to undertake a comprehensive audience evaluation of audience responses to exhibitions. However, having curated (and travelled with) several touring exhibitions of art from Taiwan, I have been able to gauge audience responses to participating artists' works from Taiwan which have indirectly informed this thesis.

¹⁰² For further information on this book see Chapter One pp.72-73.

¹⁰³ *Art & Collection* was first published 1992 and since 2000 it has produced five different publications. The ones referred to in this thesis are mainly: *Art & Collection* (典藏藝術), which focuses on contemporary art and is a monthly magazine; and *Yishu: Journal of Chinese*

Contemporary Art News (當代藝術新聞),¹⁰⁴ also featured articles and reviews on contemporary art, but these magazines are generally market-oriented and do not critically engage with the artwork. Both Chinese and English language newspapers occasionally included exhibition reviews or features on exhibitions and artists. Although some have been examined in this thesis, most reviews were generally celebratory and based on press releases. As artists often lament, art criticism in Taiwan (and in China) is a discipline that has taken time to develop. This is not surprising given the fact that Taiwan's contemporary art and museum industry only emerged in the late 1980s, and courses on art history and writing have only recently been offered in art schools.¹⁰⁵

Nevertheless, there are some museum-based publications, including the TFAM's long-standing magazines, *Modern Art* (現代美術)¹⁰⁶ and *Journal of Taipei Fine Arts Museum* (現代美術學報),¹⁰⁷ along with *Journal of the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts* (abbrev. *Taiwan Art* 臺灣美術) published by its namesake. These journals have published some critical essays and reviews on contemporary art in Chinese, and some of these have been germane to this thesis. International art journals including *Art Asia Pacific*, *Asian Art News*, *Art Monthly Australia*, occasionally *Flash Art*, and more recently *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, have also published articles, interviews and reviews

Contemporary Art which is a quarterly and was established in 2002. It is the only English language publication ARTCO produces.

¹⁰⁴ Chinese Art Books in Taipei publishes *Chinese Contemporary Art News* (當代藝術新聞) and CANS (*Chinese Art News*).

¹⁰⁵ Since 1949 courses in Chinese art history were offered, but less than five per cent of the graduate courses examined international art (and courses on the history of Taiwan art were only introduced in the early 1990s). Hsu Wen-chin, 'The Necessity of the Application of Art History in Fine Arts Museum and an Examination of the Art History Education in Taiwan' in *Symposium on the Role and Function of Contemporary Fine Arts Museums*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 1994, pp.133-134.

¹⁰⁶ *Modern Art* was first published in 1984 (when it was titled the *Taipei Fine Arts Museum Quarterly* (臺北市立美術館館刊 until 1988) and it is a Chinese-language bi-monthly magazine.

¹⁰⁷ *Journal of Taipei Fine Arts Museum* is a Chinese-language, semi-annual publication that publishes essays and reviews on art which are solicited and reviewed.

on Taiwan art, some of which have been relevant to this study, along with those this author has contributed.¹⁰⁸

Since the early 1990s, a growing volume of academic literature has been published on the importance of identity politics on Taiwan's cultural development. However, most of this literature does not examine visual art. Jason C. Kuo is one of the first scholars to critically explore the relationship between *art* and identity politics in the English language.¹⁰⁹ From the early 1990s Kuo wrote a series of essays on artistic developments (focusing primarily on painting) in Taiwan, from the period of Japanese colonisation until the early 1990s.¹¹⁰ His book, *Art and Cultural Politics in Taiwan*, published in 2000, has made an important contribution to the literature on the Taiwan art and identity issues; and, as discussed, I employ Kuo's explanation of the term 'Taiwanese consciousness' from this book in my thesis.¹¹¹

Other scholars from Taiwan, who write in Chinese and English, and all of whom studied overseas, including Liao Hsin-tien (廖新田) (currently based in Australia), Wu Chin-tao (吳金桃), Huang Hai-ming (黃海鳴) and Pan An-yi (潘安儀) (who resides in the US), have also critically explored the nexus between art and identity. Liao and Wu examine art from a broad theoretical

¹⁰⁸ From 1995 I contributed several essays to each of these journals. Those which have been referenced and/or have informed this thesis are included in the Bibliography.

¹⁰⁹ It is also important to note that art historian, Hsiao Chong-ray, also wrote a series of articles on Taiwan art and identity issues but these were in Chinese. See for example, Hsiao Chong-ray, 'Changes in the Subject Matter of Artistic Production after the Lifting of Martial Law', in *Symposium on "The Artistic Trends in the R.O.C"* (中華民國美術思潮研討會), 1992, pp.184-185 (in Chinese with an English summary).

¹¹⁰ For example, see Kuo, 'After the Empire: Chinese Painters of the Post-War Generation in Taiwan', in *Modernity in Asian Art*, 1993, pp. 105-115; 'Painters of the Postwar Generation in Taiwan', in *Cultural Change in Postwar Taiwan*, 1994, pp.246-274; 'Painting, Decolonization and Cultural Politics', *Arts Orientalis*, 1995, pp. 73-86. Jason C. Kuo is also known as Kuo Chisheng and Guo Jisheng.

¹¹¹ *Art and Cultural Politics in Taiwan* includes a chapter that examines developments in contemporary art post-1980. It focuses on a group of figurative painters including: Lo Ch'ing, Yu Peng, Chiu Ya-tsai, Cheng Tsai-tung, Chen Lai-hsing, Kuo Chuan-chiu and Yang Mao-lin. Some of the artists and ideas explored in this book were also examined in the above mentioned essays by Kuo.

and cultural perspective, engaging in issues of cultural politics, art criticism, and globalisation.¹¹² Huang and Pan, on the other hand, focus more specifically on the art, and their journal articles and catalogue essays on developments in Taiwan's contemporary art field have informed this thesis.¹¹³ All these writers' contributions to this identity discourse in art have been valuable and their ideas are further explored in this thesis. It is important to emphasise, however, that none of these authors have examined in any detail the relationship between the making of art *and* its museological representation during the rise of national identity consciousness in the post-martial law period.

In the fields of cultural studies and sociology, local and overseas-based scholars including Chen Kuan-hsing (陳光興), Liao Ping-hui (廖炳惠), Allen Chun (陳奕麟), Wang Horng-luen (or Wang Hong-lun, 汪宏倫), Shih Shu-mei (based in the US) and Jeremy E. Taylor have also explored identity issues. They examine identity within the context of the broader cultural and theoretical sphere, focusing on cultural politics and the processes of (de)colonisation, popular culture, architecture and public space.¹¹⁴ Within the field of visual

¹¹² For example (in addition to articles already mentioned by Liao Hsin-tien here) see: Wu Chin-tao, 'Worlds Apart: Problems of Interpreting Globalised Art', *Third Text*, vol. 21, issue 6, Nov. 2007, pp.719-731; 'Occupation by Absence, Preoccupation with Presence: A Worm's-Eye View of Art Biennials', *Journal of Visual Culture*, vol. 6, no.3, 2007, pp.379-386. DOI: 10.1177/1470412907084514 (accessed 29/11/2010); Huang Hai-ming, 'Local Consciousness and Cultural Identity', in *ArtTaiwan: The Contemporary Art of Taiwan*, Nicholas Jose and Yang Wen-I (eds.), G+B Arts International in association with the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 1995, pp.56-61; An-yi Pan (Pan An-yi) (ed.), *Contemporary Taiwanese Art in the Era of Contention*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 2004; Pan, 'History Remaking and Cultural Identity: Subjectivity Transformation in Taiwan's Visual Culture', *Symposium for the 6th International Conference of the Asian Society of Art*, (conference paper), Taipei, 2009, pp.29-46.

¹¹³ See An-yi Pan (Pan An-yi), 'Contemporary Taiwanese Art in the Era of Contention', in *Contemporary Taiwanese Art in the Era of Contention*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 2004, pp.70-183.

¹¹⁴ See for example: Kuan-hsing Chen (Chen Kuan-hsing) (ed.), 'Introduction: The Decolonization Question', *Trajectories: Inner Asian Cultural Studies*, Routledge, London, 1998, pp.1-49; Liao Ping-hui, 'Postmodern Literary Discourse and Contemporary Public Culture in Taiwan', Arif Dirlik and Zhang Xudong (eds.), *Boundary 2* (Postmodernism in China), vol. 24, Duke University Press, pp.41-63; Allen Chun, 'From Nationalism to Nationalizing: Cultural Imagination and State Formation in Postwar Taiwan', *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 31, 1994, pp.49-69; and 'Fuck Chineseness: On the Ambiguities of Ethnicity as Culture as Identity', *Boundary 2*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1996, pp.110-138; 'Discourses of Identity in the Changing Spaces of Public Culture in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore', *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol.

culture there are also several publications examining identity issues in other genres, especially in film and music in Taiwan.¹¹⁵ Although this literature does not engage with art directly, it nevertheless offers a useful theoretical and comparative framework within which to explore these issues of identity and representation.

Over the past decade, there have been a growing number of doctoral dissertations written by Taiwanese (in English or Chinese) examining identity issues in art or museological practice. Fang Chung-yu's (方崇瑜) study on art in the post-martial law era is one of the few published dissertations, but in this book, which is an abridged version of the thesis, the author focuses predominantly on Taiwan's history and on broader socio-political and cultural issues. A transdisciplinary study on identity and art is a challenging task and the art and artists are often overshadowed by Taiwan's national identity problem. Fang's study covers a range of topics including history, art education and art criticism, and the four 'representative' artists essentially become a backdrop for an exploration of these issues.¹¹⁶ In contrast, Yang Wen-I (羊文漪) focuses attention on the art, examining the significance of cultural tradition

13, 1996, pp.51-75. Also see Horng-luen Wang, 'National Culture and its Discontents: The Politics of Heritage and Language in Taiwan', 1949-2003, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 46, issue, 4, Oct. 2004, pp. 786-815. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0010417504000362> (accessed 24/10/2011); and Jeremy Taylor, 'Discovering a Nationalist Heritage in Present-day Taiwan', *China Heritage Quarterly*, no. 17, Mar. 2009. http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/articles.php?searchterm=017_taiwan.inc&issue=017 (accessed 3/2/2011); 'Reading History through the Built Environment', in *Cultural, Ethnic, and Political Nationalism*, 2005, pp.159-183.

¹¹⁵ For example, (in music): Wai-chung Ho (Ho Wai-chung), 'Music and Cultural Politics in Taiwan', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 10, no.4, 2007, pp.463-483. DOI: 10.1177/1367877907083080 (accessed 7/8/2009); Lin Sylvia Li-Chun, 'Toward a New Identity', *China Information*, 2003, pp. 83-107; Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan*, 2004. Also, Liao (Sebastian) Hsien-hao's discussion (and follow up conversations) on Taiwanese film and the influence of Japan in Taiwan have also provided some insight into the role of Japan and the concept of nostalgia in Taiwanese culture. For example, *The Romance of the Three Kins: The Taiwan-Japan-Mainland China Triangular Relationship Seen Through the Japan Imaginary in Taiwanese Film*, ANU lecture, Oct. 2011.

¹¹⁶ Published in English Fang Chung-yu's book comprises forty-eight pages of text. The four artists examined include Chen Ching-jung, Wu Tien-chang, Shieh Horng-jiun, and Wu Ding-wu (Walis Labai). See Fang Chung-yu, *Contemporary Art in Taiwan after 1987: On the Evolution of Four Cultural and Artistic Tendencies*, Lambert Academic Publishing, Saarbrücken, 2010.

for six contemporary artists.¹¹⁷ Although Yang's approach is more art historical than my own, her in-depth research on the two artists Wu Mali and Yang Mao-lin, in particular, has informed this study. Lai Ying-ying's (賴瑛瑛) study on the TFAM has also been instructive, shedding light on some of the less visible aspects of this museum, including its management and its relationship to government. A former employee of the TFAM, Lai is strategically placed to explore these issues and her data on the TFAM's management and exhibitions has been useful, especially in the first two chapters of my thesis.¹¹⁸ Chang Kint-suei's (張金催) thesis on the influence of KMT policy on art museums, including the TFAM, has also been helpful in this study, but his focus is primarily on the period prior to the lifting of martial law.¹¹⁹

The extent to which government policy influences museological practice in Taiwan is difficult to ascertain as there is insufficient information published on cultural policy, especially in relation to art museums specifically. However, with the growth of museum studies in Taiwan in the past decade, cultural policy has become a focus of academic study and debate. In the field of museology, scholars including Chen Kuo-ning (陳國寧), Wang Chih-hung (王志弘), and the current director of the National History Museum, Chang (Francis) Yui-tan (張譽騰) have examined the development of museums and cultural policy.¹²⁰ Edward Vickers' analyses of the political rationales of these

¹¹⁷ See Yang Wen-I, *Negotiating Traditions: Taiwanese Art Since the 1980s*, PhD thesis, University of Heidelberg, Germany, 2002. The six artists Yang examines include: Wu Mali and Yang Mao-lin (who are the focus of Chapters Four and Five), as well as Huang Chin-ho, Huang Chih-yan, Hou Chun-ming and Lien Te-cheng.

¹¹⁸ Lai Ying-ying, *展覽反思與論述實踐*—

台北市立美術館歷任館長展覽方針與策略之研究(1983-2007) (*A Reflexive Study of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum's Exhibitions 1983-2007*), PhD thesis, National Taiwan University of the Arts, 2008 (in Chinese).

¹¹⁹ Chang, *A Study of the Influence of the Government Policy*, PhD thesis, 1997.

¹²⁰ Chen Kuo-ning, 'Museums in Taiwan and the Development of Cultural Awareness', *Museum International*, vol. 60, issue 1-2, 2008, pp.123-131. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-0033.2008.00644.x (accessed 5/6/2010); 'From the Current Cultural Policy and Social Situation in Taiwan Exam the Role and Function of Fine Arts Museums' (sic), in *The Role and Function of Contemporary Fine Art Museums*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 1994, pp.95-111 (in Chinese and English); 'The Onward Marching of Museums in Taiwan', Chinese Association of Museums.

museums also offer a valuable insight into the roles they have played in Taiwan's nation-building process.¹²¹ However, these scholars focus predominantly on cultural policy, and on social history or ethnographic museums which do not display art. Felix Schöeber, an art historian and doctoral candidate, is an exception as, in his essay, he seeks to theorise museological representation of art in relation to the TFAM's role in identity formation. Drawing on Foucauldian museological theory, Schöeber focuses on the ideological function of the TFAM and its authoritarian role.¹²² However, as Vickers emphasises, since the rise of democratisation in Taiwan, museums have become significantly more complex institutions and their relationship to the state and to the community is more nuanced than Schöeber's Foucauldian-inspired views might suggest. Taiwan's political and cultural landscape has dramatically changed since the 1990s, and in this thesis I seek to draw attention to the nuances and changing contours of this landscape through the lens of artistic and museological practice.

Outside the field of Taiwan art, there is a vast amount of literature on identity issues in Asian art, exploring the effects of nationalism and globalisation, particularly in countries including China, India, Japan, Thailand and Indonesia which have attracted by far the most scholarly attention in the West. This

<http://www.cam.org.tw/english/about.htm> (accessed 2/2/2012). Chih-hung Wang (Wang Chih-hung), 台北市文化治理的性質與轉變 1967-2002 ('The Nature and Transformation of the Cultural Administration of Taipei City, 1967-2002'), *臺灣社會研究 (Taiwan: a Radical Quarterly in Social Studies)*, no.52, Dec. 2003, pp.121-186 (in Chinese); Also see Chang (Francis) Yui-tan, 'Cultural Policies and Museum Development in Taiwan', *Museum International*, vol. 58, no. 4, 2006, pp. 64-68; and public lecture at the Australian National University, Oct. 17, 2012. For an analysis of cultural policy prior to the lifting of martial law see: Winkler, in *Cultural Change in Postwar Taiwan*, 1994, pp.22-47; Huang, 'Taiwan Cultural Policy', in *Symposium on "The Artistic Trends in the R.O.C"*, 1992, pp. 267-283 (in Chinese with an English summary).

¹²¹ Edward Vickers, 'Re-writing Museums in Taiwan', in *Re-Writing Culture in Taiwan*, 2009, pp.69-101; 'History, Identity, and the Politics of Taiwan's Museums: Reflections on the DPP-KMT Transition', *China Perspectives*, (special issue: The Consolidation of a Democratic and Distinct Society) March 2010, <http://chinaperspectives.revues.org/5308> (accessed 12/8/2011); 'Museums and Nationalism in Contemporary China', *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, vol. 37, no. 3, Routledge, June 2007, pp. 365-382 (on Taiwan pp.377-380).

¹²² Schöeber, in *Re-Writing Culture*, 2009, pp.154-182.

literature (comprising exhibition catalogues, art periodicals, conference proceedings, books and bulletins – both printed and online), has traditionally fallen within the purview of art historical analysis and surveys (on Asian art generally, or on a specific region, or country); artistic and curatorial commentary (on a period, genre, artist, practice); theoretical discussion (on a concept or trend); and exhibition reviews.¹²³ Art magazines including the aforementioned *Art Asia Pacific*, *Asian Art News* and *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*; and online sites including Asia Art Archive (AAA),¹²⁴ and the Global Art and the Museum (GAM)¹²⁵ provide important avenues for critical discussion and news on developments in Asian art. During the 1990s, symposiums held in conjunction with international biennials/triennials provided an important platform for debate on identity issues in Asian art.¹²⁶ The conference proceedings and catalogues published in conjunction with these exhibitions provide valuable textual analysis and visual documentation, and this literature on Asian art generally has broadly informed this thesis. This literature provides a context for this study on Taiwan art and identity and, where relevant, these sources are referred to in this study.

Research methodology

Research on national identity issues in art is interdisciplinary, encompassing politics, economics, sociology, anthropology, art history, and cultural history. While drawing on these different disciplines, and on theories of nationalism

¹²³ A small sample includes: Clark, *Modern Asian Art*, 1998; Clark (ed.), *Modernity in Asian Art*, 1993; John Clark, Maurizio Peleggi and T.K Sabapathy (eds.), *Eye of the Beholder*, Wild Peony Press, Sydney, 2006; Turner (ed.), *Tradition and Change*, 1993; Michael Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth Century China*, University of California Press, 1996; Hou Hanru and Hans-Ulrich Obrist, *Cities on the Move*, Ostfildern-Ruit, Verlag Gerg Hatje, 1997; Alexandra Munroe, 'Contemporary Art in Asia', *Artforum International*, vol. 35, no. 8, April 1997, pp. 86-87; Patrick D. Flores, 'Renewing the Contemporary', *Under Construction: New Dimensions of Asian Art*, Tokyo, Japan Foundation Asia Center, 2002; Gao Minglu, *Total Modernity and the Avant-Garde in Twentieth-Century Chinese Art*, MIT Press, 2011; Wu Hung, *Transience: Chinese Experimental Art at the End of the Twentieth Century*, University of Chicago Press, 1999.

¹²⁴ Based in Hong Kong, Asia Art Archive (AAA) is a non-profit organisation that was initiated in 2000. See <http://www.aaa.org.hk/home.aspx> (accessed 9/2/2012).

¹²⁵ See http://globalartmuseum.de/site/about_us (accessed 12/2/2012).

¹²⁶ The Asia-Pacific Triennial symposiums held during the 1990s played an important role in promoting discussion about Asian art.

and globalisation, the focus of my study is on art and museological practice, and is thus situated within the disciplines of art history, museology, and cultural history. The methodology employed in this thesis combines historical and thematic approaches with case studies which provide the interpretative visual framework for this study. The thesis is structured chronologically, spanning 1987 until 2010, allowing for necessary overlaps, temporally and conceptually. It is not a comprehensive account or survey on the development of art in Taiwan; rather it concentrates on some of the main trends and paradigm shifts in this identity trajectory in art at critical moments in time during these two decades. Inevitably, there are individuals, exhibitions and other socio-political and cultural events that have not been mentioned in this study, but their perspectives, contributions and effects, have nevertheless informed and enriched this research.

This thesis is principally derived from primary sources based on interview materials, art, and exhibition analysis. As previously outlined, in 1995, I conducted approximately sixty recorded interviews with artists, curators, museum directors, arts administrators, art critics and writers, art historians, and other academics in Taiwan; and several of them I have interviewed more than once.¹²⁷ The recorded interviews have been vital to my research, enabling me to compare and contrast individual's views on Taiwan identity issues and examine the extent to which they have changed over this time. This primary material has been supplemented by secondary sources which include catalogue essays, journal articles, and magazine and newspaper reviews and reports in print and electronic media; as well as scholarly publications. In addition, materials generated by the individual artists, including essays, statements, and resumes, have also been a valuable source of information. On occasion, I have required translation assistance for some Chinese materials;

¹²⁷ In most cases, these interviews initially began as an informal exchange, and subsequently a questionnaire was developed which included more specific questions about identity issues, and about particular works which were selected for analysis. See Appendix B for a list of selected interviews used in this thesis.

and in most of the bilingual publications I have followed the English translations (while noting any important discrepancies between the English and Chinese, which affect the context or meaning).

The methodological approach and research underpinning this thesis has also been shaped and informed by my curatorial research on Taiwan art. Over the past decade, when working as an independent curator and museum director, I have curated several exhibitions that either exclusively focused on, or included, art from Taiwan. The main ones include: *Face to Face: Contemporary art from Taiwan* (1999-2000);¹²⁸ *Islanded: Contemporary Art from New Zealand, Singapore and Taiwan* (2005);¹²⁹ and *Penumbra: Contemporary Art from Taiwan* (2007-2008).¹³⁰ It is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine these individual exhibitions in any detail but it is relevant to note that they toured Australia, and/or were shown in New Zealand and Asia, and received art media attention.¹³¹ These exhibitions have been critical to the development of my thinking and to my understanding of developments in Taiwan's art field. *Face to Face* receives comparatively greater attention in this thesis than other exhibitions because it most directly relates to my key research questions and field of study.¹³²

¹²⁸ *Face to Face* was co-organised by Gold Coast City Art Gallery and the TFAM. It opened at the Gold Coast Art Gallery in 1999 and toured to six venues in Australia and New Zealand.

¹²⁹ *Islanded* was co-curated by myself, Eugene Tan (then director of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Singapore) and the Singapore-based independent critic Lee Weng Choy. It opened at the Adam Art Gallery (where I was the director) in New Zealand, and subsequently toured to the Institute of Contemporary Art, Singapore.

¹³⁰ *Penumbra* opened at the Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art in 2007 in conjunction with the Adelaide Festival of the Arts. Selected works were subsequently presented at the Centre for Contemporary Photography (CCP) in Melbourne, 2008. I also curated an exhibition entitled *Still Present: Exploring Psychiatric Institutions in Photography* that featured works by Taiwan photographer, Chang Chien-chi in 2005.

¹³¹ Selected reviews and articles on exhibitions in journals and newspapers include: Ilse Chin, 'Face to Face: Contemporary Art from Taiwan', *IIAS Newsletter*, International Institute for Asian Studies, no. 19, Leiden, 2000; Nicholas Jose, 'Penumbra: Contemporary Art from Taiwan, Samstag Museum of Art, University of South Australia', *Art Monthly*, no.209, May 2008, pp.9-11; Rosemary Sorenson, 'Taiwanese project their uncertainties', *The Australian - Arts*, March 11 2008, p.15; Louise Menzies, 'Islanded: Contemporary art from New Zealand, Singapore, and Taiwan' - Exhibition Review, *Art Asia Pacific*, no. 50, Fall 2006, pp.116-117.

¹³² *Face to Face* was an outcome of my academic research undertaken in the mid-1990s in Taiwan for a Masters of Philosophy (in fine art) degree. It is further discussed in Chapter Six

Selection of case studies

The selection of individual artists and exhibitions for this thesis presented challenges because of the number of artists and exhibitions exploring identity issues during the 1990s. Rather than generating a broad sweeping survey of artistic developments in Taiwan, I have aimed for an in-depth account and analysis of the ways in which artists and museums responded to and contested politically inspired notions of identity. The artist case studies were selected on the basis that each of the four artists were directly engaged in this identity discourse in critical and distinctive ways, and over a prolonged period of time. It is my contention that each made a unique and enduring contribution to this discourse, not only as artists, but also as writers, critics, and activists. The exhibitions I have chosen to examine also responded to and engaged in issues of identity and they offer an insight into the relationship between governments (both national and municipal) and the museum through the representation of art. Together, the artist and exhibition case studies highlight the parallels and divergences between individual artists' perspectives on identity and the ways it was envisioned in museological discourse at the time. They serve as a two-way mirror, reflecting inwards and outwards, on the micro and macro, offering both a detailed and expansive reading of this identity discourse, and the ways art and politics interacted at this time.

I have selected four artists as case studies (Mei Dean-E, Yang Mao-lin, Wu Mali and Yao Jui-chung) based on the following criteria. First, these artists were (and some still are) amongst Taiwan's most active and recognised contemporary artists, participating in major exhibitions, nationally and internationally. Secondly, several of these artists were also art writers, critics, curators, and activists and have demonstrated a sustained, intellectual and

on Yao Jui-chung (p.284) who was one of the artists represented in this exhibition. A small selection of Yao Jui-chung's work also featured in *Islanded: Contemporary Art from New Zealand, Singapore and Taiwan*.

artistic engagement in identity politics. Their contributions towards the development of art and this identity debate have been significant. Thirdly, their motives and terms of engagement in this identity discourse were distinctly different, and while each of these artists supported (to varying degrees) Taiwan's self-determination, their perspectives on Taiwan's identity, and what it means and looks like, engendered markedly different views, which are reflected in their work. Their differing ideological, artistic and personal perspectives on these identity issues reflect the complexities, tensions and paradoxes underpinning this discourse. While these artists and their works certainly offer a valuable insight into the dynamic relationship between art and identity formation in Taiwan, it is important to emphasise that this research is not an exhaustive survey of Taiwan art, and that these artists' personal views and artistic trajectories were not necessarily shared or followed by every artist in Taiwan. It is also important to point out that views held by these four individual artists changed over the course of these twenty years, and the comments and claims they made in earlier interviews do not necessarily reflect what they believe today.

My main museum case study has developed out of my experience with and analysis of the TFAM.¹³³ The TFAM is also significant politically and culturally as it was Taiwan's first purpose-built public art museum dedicated to the presentation and promotion of modern and contemporary art. Since its establishment numerous art museums, both public and private, as well as commercial galleries and alternative art spaces have opened in Taiwan,¹³⁴ and

¹³³ In 1998 I was awarded a Taiwan government grant to undertake a six month curatorial residency at the TFAM which was a co-organiser of the exhibition *Face to Face*. Since this time I have maintained contact with several TFAM employees, including some of its directors.

¹³⁴ Other public art museums which have since opened include the Taiwan Province Museum of Fine Arts (re-named the National Museum of Fine Arts, hereafter NTMFA) estab. in 1988 in Taichung; the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts (hereafter KMFA) which opened in 1994 in the southern city of Kaohsiung; and more alternative art spaces including IT Park and New Paradise galleries. Although official statistics of the current number of museums/galleries in Taiwan are unavailable, according to the scholar Chen Guo-ning, in the 1990s there were more than 300 museums in Taiwan – however, the majority of these are not art related. Chen, 'The Onward Marching of Museums', Chinese Association of Museums, (online). The

have established reputations for programmes that are arguably more adventurous than those of the TFAM. The TFAM nevertheless remains the chief arbiter of art in Taiwan, partly because it is responsible for organising two of Taiwan's most important art exhibitions: the Taipei Biennial and Taiwan's representation at the Venice Biennale. The Taipei and Venice biennials are unequivocally the two most important exhibitions on Taiwan's visual art calendar, representing Taiwan and Taiwan art on a local and global level, and as such they explicitly or implicitly engage in issues of identity and national representation. For these reasons, and to allow for a sustained comparative analysis, these exhibitions constitute the principal case studies.

Structure of thesis

The thesis is divided into three sections which are chronologically organised. Sections One and Three provide the macro context, exploring national and global developments primarily in the museological representation of art. Section Two encompasses the artist case studies, demonstrating how, at the micro level, such developments manifested in the trajectories of individual artists. Focusing on the period from 1987 to 2000, Section One comprises two chapters which examine respectively the rise of Taiwan consciousness and internationalism as explored through a series of exhibitions.

Focusing on the period between 1987 and 1997 Chapter One examines the TFAM's political and cultural role in national identity formation. Within the context of the abolition of martial law and the rise of Taiwanese nationalism, it demonstrates how identity narratives in museological discourse became increasingly Taiwan-centred. This is demonstrated through exhibitions including *Taiwan Art 1945-1993* (1993), *Quest for Identity* (1996), and *Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Faces* (1997) the latter two of which were presented as part of the Taipei Biennial and the Venice Biennale. It is the contention of this chapter

majority of art museums and galleries in Taiwan are located in Taipei but there are a growing number of commercial art galleries opening in regional centres across the island.

that these exhibitions were underscored by a nationalist desire to reclaim, re-define and legitimise Taiwan's national identity, and to distinguish it from China.

While Chapter One examines the TFAM's contribution to the re-definition of Taiwan's identity nationally, Chapter Two focuses on its role in Taiwan's quest for international recognition. I explore how regional and global economic and cultural developments triggered a critical re-evaluation of Taiwan's national identity and a growing awareness of Taiwan's role in Asia. I contend that the TFAM's first international Taipei Biennial *Site of Desire* (1998) reflected this shift and this exhibition, along with Taiwan's representation at the Venice Biennale, demonstrably marked a critical turning point in the museological representation of identity.

Section Two's four artist case studies offer individualised accounts of the political, ethnic, and cultural issues addressed in the sections that book-end them. Chapter Three focuses on Mei Dean-E, whose works highlight the inherent paradoxes underpinning Taiwan's quest for identity. Focusing on Taiwan's relationship with China and Japan, and on Taiwan's desire for international recognition, his work offers valuable insights into the politics and polemics of identity in Taiwan. Mei has been defined as a *waishengren* (Mainlander) and I argue that this, along with the fact he studied in New York, and maintained a dispassionate and critical perspective on identity issues, distinguishes him from his peers. These points are explored in relation to notions of identity, identification, and cultural belonging, which are key themes in his work.

Yang Mao-lin (Chapter Four) played a leading role in the development of Taiwan identity consciousness and I argue that, more than any other artist discussed here, he strategically used his art as a vehicle to promote Taiwan's identity. His *Made in Taiwan* painting series (1989-1996) is emblematic of

Taiwan consciousness because the artist effectively re-writes Taiwan's historical trajectory. Within the context of this series, this chapter explores the interrelationship between Taiwan's indigenous and colonial past and its quest for identity and sovereignty, and the role of narrative and invented traditions in the construction of national identity.

While Yang, Mei and Yao explore identity issues from a national perspective, Wu Mali (Chapter Five) examines identity issues from a local and feminist perspective, focusing on social, environmental and gender issues. Notwithstanding her *bensheng* 'ethnic' status, and her ideological commitment to self-determination, Wu is essentially an international artist and, unlike Yang, she is not a cultural nationalist. This chapter demonstrates how Wu's reading of the nation of Taiwan diverged significantly from Yang's and this is reflected in several key works in which she calls attention to the myths and the realities underpinning Taiwan's nationalist narratives.

As the youngest of the four artists examined in this thesis, Yao Jui-chung (Chapter Six) demonstrated a keen and sustained interest in national identity issues, but he did not share his peers' ideological conviction or their emotional connection to the idea of the nation. Combining official histories with fictional and personal narratives, this chapter demonstrates how Yao effectively undermined national and ethnic identity discourses, and satirized Taiwan-China relations. This chapter foreshadows a shift in Taiwan's identity discourse in visual art, from a preoccupation with national identity towards a global and cosmopolitan vision.

Section Three returns to the museological representation of art. Focusing on the period from 2000 to 2010 these two chapters explore the effects of globalisation and the rise of China respectively on identity narratives in the Taipei and Venice biennials. Chapter Seven explores the ways in which local and global forces converged in the museological representation of art and

were re-conceptualised in the curatorial and display strategies implemented in the Taipei Biennial. It also explores how concepts of cultural pluralism, hybridity and the diaspora, which undermined fixed notions of identity and place, were embraced in Taiwan's representations at the Venice Biennale.

As increasing numbers of Taiwan businesses, artists and gallerists are re-locating to China, Chapter Eight explores how this drive to engage economically with China has impacted on the museological representation of art. It explores how art has become a vehicle of soft power deployed by governments on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to forge closer economic, cultural and, some might argue, political ties. This is exemplified by the growing number and size of cross-strait exhibition exchanges which highlight Taiwan and China's shared cultural heritage, while simultaneously promoting Taiwan's cultural distinctiveness. This opening up of cross-strait dialogue and exchange has triggered divergent responses from within Taiwan's visual arts field. These are probed in this chapter and raise questions about the future growth and direction of contemporary art, and of Taiwan's continuing quest for national identity.

Nations and national identities are imagined and negotiated constructs. They are relational and spatial, shaped by changing local and global political, economic and cultural realities. Focusing on the intersection between politics and art, this thesis highlights the critical roles and contributions made by artists, curators and art museums in the re-presentation of Taiwan's national identity. In the following chapters I demonstrate how Taiwan's art community engaged proactively in this discourse, particularly during the 1990s when concerns about Taiwan's identity and its geopolitical status in the world intensified. The case studies exemplify how artists, curators and art museums conjured up images and narratives that questioned, critiqued, challenged and promoted Taiwan's identity. They also reflect how conceptions of 'the nation' and national identity shifted in visual art discourse, from a Chinese to a

Taiwanese and a global outlook that inevitably included China. This shift, I argue, was triggered by national and global political, economic and cultural trends and by a yearning, shared by most artists around the world, to be part of and recognised within the global art sphere.

PART I

LOCALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM IN THE MUSEOLOGICAL REPRESENTATION OF ART AT THE TAIPEI FINE ARTS MUSEUM (1987-2000)

CHAPTER ONE

"Recovering" "The Nation" in the Museological Representation of Taiwan Art 1987-1997

Museums play an important nation-building role, generating and transporting narratives about the nation that help forge a sense of national identity, unity and order. Samuel Anderson highlights the function of museums as vehicles for the invention, dissemination and legitimization of identity narratives, contributing to the formation of a national consciousness.¹⁵ Founded in 1983, the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (hereafter TFAM), which is Taiwan's

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LOCALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM IN THE MUSEOLOGICAL REPRESENTATION OF ART AT THE TAIPEI FINE ARTS MUSEUM (1987-2000)

In this chapter, I will discuss the role of the TFAM in and its contribution to the rise of Taiwan identity consciousness within a contested political and cultural context in relation to the lifting of martial law and the rise of Taiwanization. It focuses on the period from 1987 to 1997, when the idea of a "Taiwan" culture, as a distinct political and cultural entity, attracted political attention and cultural support in Taiwan. Based on extensive case studies, this research demonstrates how identity narratives of Taiwan's aboriginal and local histories and cultures displaced Chinese Nationalist ideologues that prevailed in museums prior to the lifting martial law. In this chapter, I contend that during this period, in particular, art and politics were closely ideologically aligned and this is exemplified in the museological representation of art at the TFAM.

This chapter focuses on three exhibitions organized by the TFAM, the primary one being the Taipei Biennial: *Order for Identity* (1990), *Subjectivity in Taiwan Art* (1995) and *20 Years of Taiwan Art* (1997), which as its title suggests, explicitly engaged in questions of identity. In addition, *Taiwan Art 1945-1975 Chinese New Face* (New Face of Taiwan Art) (1975) and *Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Future*

¹⁵ Anderson, *Inventing Communities*, 95, 100-101.

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Museums play an important nation-building role, generating and transmitting narratives about the nation that help forge a sense of national identity, unity and pride. Benedict Anderson highlights the function of museums, as vehicles for the invention, dissemination and legitimisation of identity narratives, contributing to the formation of imagined communities.¹³⁵ From its inception in 1983, the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (hereafter TFAM), which is Taiwan's most widely recognised public art museum, has played a key role in the development and promotion of Taiwan's identity, both nationally and internationally. This chapter investigates the TFAM's role in and its contribution to the rise of Taiwan identity consciousness within a domestic political and cultural context in relation to the lifting of martial law and the rise of Taiwanisation. It focuses on the period from 1987 to 1997, when the idea of a 'Taiwan nation', as a distinct political and cultural entity, attracted political attention and cultural support in Taiwan. Based on exhibition case studies, this research demonstrates how identity narratives on Taiwan's aboriginal and local histories and culture displaced Chinese Nationalist orthodox views that prevailed in museums prior to the lifting of martial law. In this chapter I contend that during this period, in particular, art and politics were closely ideologically aligned and this is exemplified in the museological representation of art at the TFAM.

This chapter focuses on three exhibitions organised by the TFAM, the principal one being the Taipei Biennial's *Quest for Identity* (Chinese title, *Subjectivity in Taiwan Art* 台灣藝術主體性) which, as its title suggests, explicitly engaged in questions of identity. In addition, *Taiwan Art 1945-1993* (Chinese title, *New Face of Taiwan Art* 台灣美術新風貌) and *Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Faces*

¹³⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 1991, pp.178-184.

(台灣台灣: 面目全非) are examined, the latter of which was shown in Italy in conjunction with the Venice Biennale. These exhibitions engaged in Taiwan's identity discourse in distinctly different ways, targeting domestic and overseas audiences. Nonetheless, they shared a common objective which was to demonstrate the cultural distinctiveness of Taiwan's identity defined by its colonial and Austronesian histories, and notions of multiculturalism and democracy which would help distinguish it from China. This contrasted markedly to the TFAM's exhibitions prior to the lifting of martial law when the Chinese Nationalist government sought to promote Taiwan's *Chinese* cultural values and traditions. As such, I argue that these exhibitions signify a paradigmatic shift in the visual conception and representation of Taiwan's identity in art during this period of democratisation and heightened Taiwanese, as distinct from Chinese, nationalism.

In order to understand the TFAM's role and agency in this identity discourse it is necessary firstly to explore the relationship between the TFAM, as a public institution, and the state. I examine this relationship in the first part of this chapter in relation to Taiwan's political transformation from a Chinese one-party state into a democratised and Taiwanised society. The ways this transformation impacted on the TFAM's management and on the development of curatorial practice is also analysed here. The relationship between the museum and the state generally has been widely theorised by scholars who have explored the political function of museums as instruments for ideological indoctrination, social regulation and identity formation.¹³⁶ However, scholarship on the politics of Taiwan's museums, and more specifically on the impact of political ideology on the TFAM and its exhibition programmes, is limited.¹³⁷ The research for this chapter has been informed by interviews I

¹³⁶ Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, 1995; Duncan, in *Exhibiting Cultures*, 1991; Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, Routledge, London, 1992.

¹³⁷ The literature on the impact of politics on the TFAM comprise mainly doctoral dissertations including: Lai Ying-ying, *A Reflexive Study of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum*, PhD, 2008 (in Chinese); Chang Kin-tsuei, *A Study of the Influence of Government Policy*, PhD, 1997. In his

conducted with museum directors, curators, art critics and also artists in the mid-1990s when Taiwan nationalism peaked in the art field. It also draws on visual analysis of exhibitions, and information gleaned from secondary sources, including catalogues and magazine reviews. It investigates the extent to which the TFAM was influenced by politics, and the ways it contributed to this identity debate. Focusing on the intersection between the politics of identity and museological representation, this chapter demonstrates the ways the TFAM adjusted its approach and generated exhibitions that no longer centred on China, but probed and promoted the idea of a 'Taiwan nation'.

The TFAM and the roles of museums in a shifting political landscape

Situated in the capital Taipei, the TFAM (fig. 1.1) is often mistaken for Taiwan's national art museum. It is in fact a *municipal* institution, administered by the Taipei City Government¹³⁸ as distinct from the central government which oversees Taiwan's *national* institutions.¹³⁹ The TFAM's subordinate municipal status, its governance structure, and the extent of the city government's political intervention in this museum have been widely criticised in the local art field, including from within the TFAM.¹⁴⁰ The Taipei city government

discussion on more recent political developments and museums, Vickers also refers to the impact of the DPP-KMT transition on the TFAM's exhibition programmes. See Vickers, 'History, Identity, and the Politics', *China Perspectives*, 2010 (online).

¹³⁸ The TFAM was governed by the Education Bureau until 1999 when the Taipei city government established a Cultural Bureau.

¹³⁹ Until 2012, Taiwan's national museums were generally governed by the central government's Council for Cultural Affairs (CCA) (*wenjianhui* 文建會) established in 1981. It was renamed the Ministry of Culture (*wenhuabu* 文化部) in May 2012. The National Palace Museum is an exception as it reports directly to the Executive Yuan. In 1999, the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (NTMFA) (formerly the Taiwan Province Museum of Fine Arts) was brought under the jurisdiction of the CCA and is Taiwan's only national art museum. The Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts (KMFA) established in 1994 is the other main state-funded art museum in Taiwan, and similar to the TFAM it is governed by a municipal government. It is noteworthy that within this period of study, each of the three mayors of the Taipei city government has subsequently been elected President (i.e. Lee Teng-hui, Chen Shui-bian and Ma Ying-jeou).

¹⁴⁰ See Victoria Lu, 'The New Wave of Contemporary Taiwan Art 1983-1993: A Decade of Metamorphosis', in *Taiwan Art 1945-1993*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 1993, p.71; Chang, *A Study of the Influence of Government Policy*, PhD, 1997, pp.196-203. Also the former TFAM director, Huang Kuang-nan remarks on the 'red tape' and bureaucratic aspects of the museum's governance structure in Jerome Keating, 'Mad for What's Modern', *Free China*

appoints the museum director, and with a change of government,¹⁴¹ the TFAM director is replaced with another candidate of the same political 'colour' as the new municipal government.¹⁴² This ideological accord is critical to an understanding of the TFAM's role and agency in Taiwan's national identity discourse. Following democratisation and the establishment of several new art museums, the relationship between the government and the TFAM has become less hierarchical and more nuanced.¹⁴³ However, I argue that politics still has a significant influence on the TFAM's management, and this is reflected in its management and exhibitions. In 1994, the opposition DPP (Democratic Progressive Party), which traditionally promoted Taiwan independence, won the Taipei municipal government elections. This, as I later discuss, marked a major shift in the museological representation of identity in art at the TFAM.

As Edward Vickers demonstrates in his critical discussion on the political genealogy of museums, public museums in Taiwan generally are influenced by political ideology and have been for more than a century.¹⁴⁴ Since the establishment of the first museum in Taiwan in 1908,¹⁴⁵ museums were

Review, Dec. 1991 pp.58-59; Jim Hwang, 'The New Face of Taiwan Art', *Free China Review*, vol. 44, no. 3, March 1994, p.60. Also Huang Kuang-nan, 'Abstract-Culture Policy and Museum Development: Some Mediation on Museum Phenomena in Taiwan,' *Cultural Policy and Museum Management International Symposium*, 2009 Annual Forum for Museum Directors and Strategic Alliance of Asia Pacific Museums, (conf. paper), National Taiwan University of the Arts, Oct. 2009, p.100.

¹⁴¹ Taipei's City Government mayors are elected to serve a four-year term and may be re-elected for a second term in office.

¹⁴² In Taiwan, the KMT is popularly described as the 'Pan-Blue Party' and the DPP as 'Pan-Green Party'.

¹⁴³ Until 1999, when the Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts in Taichung was given "national" status (when it was re-named the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, or NTMFA) the TFAM was regarded as Taiwan's "national" art museum and represented Taiwan on the international art stage. Although the TFAM is still the chief organiser of Taiwan's two main international exhibitions, the Taipei and Venice biennials, the government is increasingly looking to the NTMFA to play a greater role in Taiwan's international relations.

¹⁴⁴ Vickers in *Re-Writing Culture in Taiwan*, 2009, pp.69-101; also in *China Perspectives*, 2010, pp.92-106.

¹⁴⁵ This museum was known as the Taiwan Governor-General Museum and was established by the Japanese colonial government. When the KMT arrived in Taiwan it was re-named the

strategically deployed by the Japanese and KMT ruling governments to enforce and disseminate political and cultural doctrine.¹⁴⁶ As the self-appointed custodians of China's cultural heritage, the KMT sought to instil a sense of *Chinese* nationalism through language, education, and culture in Taiwan. Museums functioned as social education halls, providing civic instruction and ensuring the moral regulation and edification of the local populace.¹⁴⁷ Scholars describe cultural policy during this period as a 'defence policy'¹⁴⁸ aimed at purging the island of political and cultural difference; and they characterize cultural governance as 'cultural control'.¹⁴⁹ The National Palace Museum (NPM)¹⁵⁰ and the National Museum of History (NMH)¹⁵¹ were deployed to promote the KMT's vision of 'cultural China', a mythical concept based on China's 'sacred origins' and its 'continuous history'.¹⁵² As an indication of their perceived importance, these were the only two museums on which the KMT bestowed national status during this period. By the 1990s, however, as part of the process of Taiwanisation, several museums were nationalised and given the title, 'Taiwan', nomenclature that gained currency in museological practice

Taiwan Provincial Museum until 1999 when the central government re-named it the National Taiwan Museum.

¹⁴⁶ Vickers, in *Re-Writing Culture in Taiwan*, 2009, pp. 72, 75-78.

¹⁴⁷ In 1954, the KMT passed a social education law which was applied to museums, *Sinorama* 'Of the People, By the People, for the People: Small Museums in Taiwan', July 1998, p.127. For more information on the KMT's cultural policy see references in the Introduction pp.20-21.

¹⁴⁸ Chang, *A Study of the Influence of Government Policy*, PhD, 1997, p.50.

¹⁴⁹ Chih-hung Wang (Wang Chih-hung), 'The Nature and Transformation', *Social Studies in Taiwan*, 2003, pp. 121-186 (in Chinese).

¹⁵⁰ The NPM was built by the KMT in 1965 and was both a storehouse and an exhibition venue to display the 6,000 or more artworks and artefacts the KMT seized prior to fleeing China from Beijing's National Palace Museum and the Central Museum in Nanjing. The story of how these valuable cultural relics were transported from China to Taiwan has been recorded in detail on the museum's website. See <http://www.npm.gov.tw/en/about/tradition.htm> (accessed 16/4/2011).

¹⁵¹ The NMH (formerly the National Museum of Historical Artefacts and Fine Arts) housed 'relics recovered from the Japanese after the Sino-Japanese War' and objects the KMT 're-located' from the Henan Provincial Museum to Taiwan. See <http://www.nmh.gov.tw/en-us/Evolution/Content.aspx?Para=6&unkey=38> (accessed 18/4/2011).

¹⁵² Chun, 'From Nationalism to Nationalizing', *Australian Journal for Chinese Affairs*, 1994, p.55. For a more detailed discussion on this concept of 'cultural China' see Tu Weiming, 'Cultural China: the Periphery as the Center', *Daedalus*, vol. 120, issue 2, Spring 1991, pp.1-32.

with the rise of Taiwan nationalism and after the KMT officially relinquished its claim as the representative government of China in 1991.¹⁵³

In 1977, when plans to build the TFAM were formalised, Chiang Kai-shek's heir, President Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國) (1978-1988), actively pursued a modernisation programme to ensure Taiwan's national survival after it was expelled from the United Nations. The construction of the TFAM was an integral part of this agenda.¹⁵⁴ It was designed to celebrate Taiwan's national and cultural achievements and promote Taiwan overseas.¹⁵⁵ It was used as a vehicle to engender national consciousness and unity, and enhance Taiwan's profile in the international community. The international dimensions of the TFAM's role are discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

In accordance with the KMT's political ideology, which officially maintained its position as the representative government of China, during the 1980s the TFAM's exhibitions promoted the orthodoxy of Chinese tradition, albeit within a modernist cultural paradigm. This is reflected in its exhibitions, including *An Exhibition of Chinese Calligraphy, Poetry and Painting* (1984), *From Tradition to Innovation: An Exhibition of Classical Chinese Interior Design* (1985) and *Abstract Ink Painting ROC* (1986). According to the Mayor of Taipei, the TFAM's mandate was to 'regain the glorious status of Chinese art in the world';¹⁵⁶ and Lai Ying-ying (賴瑛瑛), an academic and former employee at the TFAM, demonstrates how, under the inaugural directorship of Su Rui-ping

¹⁵³ In 1998, President Lee Teng-hui instigated a programme to merge some provincial and national government bodies; and when Chen Shui-bian became President in 2000 several cultural institutions were nationalised. Today, Taiwan has more than ten 'national' museums, including: the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts; the National Museum of Taiwan History established in Tainan in 2011; the National Museum of History in Taipei (which has a Chinese focus); the National Museum of Prehistory that opened in Taitung in 2001; the National Museum of Taiwan Literature in Tainan that opened in 2003; and the National Science and Technology Museum established in Kaohsiung in 1997.

¹⁵⁴ It is relevant to note that the KMT also built cultural centres (*wenhua zhongxin*) in many counties during this time which promoted Taiwan's local culture.

¹⁵⁵ The building design of the TFAM was intended to resemble the Chinese character *井* (井) meaning 'a well' to symbolize the museum as a 'wellspring of culture' in the city.

¹⁵⁶ Hsu Shui-teh, 'Preface of Mayor', in *An Exhibition of Abstract Painting*, TFAM, 1984, p.4.

(蘇瑞屏, or Martha Su) (Dec. 1983-Aug. 1986), exhibition policy was conservative and ideologically directed. The principal function of the TFAM was civic instruction¹⁵⁷ and, in this Confucian society, education remains central to the TFAM's mission.¹⁵⁸ Exhibitions focused on painting, especially ink and abstract painting, derived from Chinese cultural tradition;¹⁵⁹ and exhibition titles generally incorporated the words 'China', 'Chinese', 'Taipei' and 'ROC', rather than 'Taiwan', which was associated with Taiwan independence.¹⁶⁰ However, the extent to which the TFAM reflected KMT ideology was most clearly illustrated in 1984, when a red, abstract sculpture by artist Lee Tsai-chien (李再鈐) that was displayed outside the museum was re-painted in silver after it had been compared by a passerby (a retired KMT soldier) to the red star, a symbol of communism (fig. 1.2).¹⁶¹ In an interview with the artist he remarked that, although Taiwan promoted itself to the world as culturally progressive, government control over freedom of expression prevailed.¹⁶² This infamous event sparked protests and debates about the

¹⁵⁷ Lai Ying-ying, *A Reflexive Study of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum*, PhD, 2008 (in Chinese).

¹⁵⁸ In 1996 the TFAM Acting Director states, 'Since its inception, the aim of the Taipei Fine Arts Exhibition has been to promote art education.' Liu, Bao-guey, 'Museum Director's Preface', in *23rd Taipei Annual Arts Competition*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 1996, p.9. In exhibitions, one of the key criteria for selecting judges and artists has been their academic credentials and/or their contribution to art education. The importance of education in the TFAM's programmes is referred to in: Lai Ying-ying, *A Reflexive Study of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum*, PhD, 2008, (in Chinese); Keating, 'Mad for What's Modern', *Free China Review*, 1991, pp.63-64; Jim Hwang, 'The New Face of Taiwan Art', *Free China Review*, 1994, p.58.

¹⁵⁹ In addition to the aforementioned exhibitions, there were several retrospectives held by some of Taiwan's older generation of painters from China, such as Kuo Po-chuan (郭柏川) (1984), and the pioneer of abstract painting in Taiwan, Lee Chun-shan (李仲生) (1984). It was within this Chinese cultural rubric that local contemporary artists' works were also contextualised. See for example, *New Horizons: Contemporary Trends in Chinese Art* (1984) which was the TFAM's first contemporary art exhibition featuring works by local artists under the age of forty-five years; and *A Retrospective Exhibition of Contemporary Chinese Art* (1986).

¹⁶⁰ Lai Ying-ying, *A Reflexive Study of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum*, PhD, 2008 (in Chinese).

¹⁶¹ Jason S.T. Kuo, 'Taiwan Sculpture: Growing Up and Moving On', *Asia-Pacific Sculpture News*, Winter 1995, p.37. Twenty years later, in 2006, Li produced a close replica of this sculpture that is located in the TFAM's forecourt.

¹⁶² Lee Tsai-chien, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei. It is noteworthy, that in 1994, prior to the handover of Hong Kong, local artist Danny Yang produced a large red sculpture symbolising Communist China which was installed in a prominent public site on the harbour. However, it did not appear to have attracted the same degree of public interest as Li's sculpture in Taiwan. David Clarke, 'The Culture of a Border Within: Hong Kong Art and China', *Art Journal*, vol. 59, no. 2, Summer 2000, p.97.

museum's professionalism and artists' intellectual property rights and, according to the writer and sculptor, Jason S.T Kuo (郭少宗), it was 'one of the most divisive episodes in contemporary Taiwan art politics'.¹⁶³

The lifting of martial law and rising Taiwan(ese) identity consciousness

After martial law was rescinded in 1987, the KMT was officially no longer 'the sole voice of culture'¹⁶⁴ and there was a marked relaxation of state government control, signified by the legalisation of political opposition parties, the liberalisation of the media, and the lifting of restrictions on organised public interest groups. As Vickers indicates, the relationship between the government and museums in Taiwan gradually transformed from a 'rigid structure simply imposed from above' to a more 'complex and shifting process of negotiation'.¹⁶⁵ As acknowledged earlier, since martial law was abolished, the municipal government's control and influence over the TFAM is less overt. Nevertheless, it still appoints the museum director (who, as stated, is more often than not from the same political party). It is my contention that an 'exhibitionary complex', characterised by Tony Bennett as an interconnected web of political and cultural agendas, prevails in the TFAM and this is reflected in its exhibition programmes. Before turning to some of these exhibitions it is necessary to explore briefly the wider ramifications of democratisation on Taiwan's political landscape and on changing conceptions of identity which, accordingly, had a significant bearing on the TFAM.

On 20 May 1990, Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) became the first Taiwan-born President (1988-2000). Although a member of the traditionally pro-unification KMT, Lee's contribution to the 'indigenization'¹⁶⁶ of Taiwan's identity and the

¹⁶³ Kuo, 'Taiwan Sculpture', *Asia-Pacific Sculpture News*, 1995, p.37.

¹⁶⁴ Chun, 'From Nationalism to Nationalizing', *The Australian Journal for Chinese Affairs*, 1994, p.58.

¹⁶⁵ Vickers, in *Re-Writing Culture in Taiwan*, 2009, p.71.

¹⁶⁶ Hung-mao Tien and Yun-han Chu, 'Taiwan's Domestic Political Reforms, Institutional Change and Power Realignment', in *Taiwan in the Asia-Pacific in the 1990s*, Gary Klintworth

formation of a 'Taiwan nation' has been widely acknowledged.¹⁶⁷ His election was significant because not only did it represent the successful Taiwanisation of the KMT, but it signified the end of Chinese Nationalist rule as political power was symbolically transferred from the *waishengren* (Mainlanders) to the *benshengren* (Taiwanese). Moreover, on a broader level it marked a rise of Taiwan-China separatism on the island. In 1990 Lee's government revised its national policy towards China,¹⁶⁸ from 'one China' to 'one China, two equal political entities'.¹⁶⁹ In so doing, the KMT symbolically renounced its claim as the sole representative government of China and, while it officially retained its policy of reunification with China, it asserted that the Republic of China (ROC) and the People's Republic of China (PRC) must remain 'separate but equal entities' until such time as China was able to 'implement political democracy and renounce the use of military force'.¹⁷⁰ Lee's emphasis on 'two Chinas',¹⁷¹ and his proposition to engage in 'special state-to-state' relations until such time as China embraced democracy were inevitably regarded with contempt and scepticism by the PRC government. In March 1996, days before Taiwan's first democratic presidential election, the Chinese government fired a second

(ed.), Allen & Unwin in association with the Australian National University, St. Leonards, 1994, p.3.

¹⁶⁷ Bruce Jacobs and Ben Liu I-hao, 'Lee Teng-hui and the Idea of "Taiwan"', *The China Quarterly*, vol. 190, June 2007, pp. 375-393. DOI: 10.1017/S0305741007001245 (accessed 3/7/2010); Corcuff, 'Taiwan's "Mainlanders", New Taiwanese?' in *Memories of the Future*, 2002, pp.163-196.

¹⁶⁸ The National Reunification Guidelines outlined Taiwan's short, intermediate and long-term policies towards China. These revised guidelines proposed that, while the 'mainland and Taiwan are both territories of China [...] China's unification, its timing and its method, must first respect the rights of people in the Taiwan region. Government Information Office, 'National Unification Guidelines' (國家統一綱領), *Republic of China Yearbook 1991-1992*, Kwang Hua, Taipei, 1991, pp.583-84. President Lee approved these guidelines on 5 March 1992 and on 14 March 1992 they were approved by cabinet.

¹⁶⁹ There are numerous versions of this concept, including 'one China, two governments', 'one China, two systems', 'one China, two states of one nation', and 'one country, two areas'. See Sheng Lijun, *China and Taiwan: Cross-Strait Relations Under Chen Shui-bian*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2002; Wu Yu-shan, 'The Evolution of the KMT's Stance on the One China Principle: National Identity in Flux', in *Taiwanese identity in the twenty-first century*, 2011, pp.51-71.

¹⁷⁰ These conditions were outlined by Lee in his inaugural Presidential speech in May 1990. Jacobs and Liu, 'Lee Teng-hui', *The China Quarterly*, 2007, pp. 381-382. Also see Amy Lo, 'Strait Talk', *Free China Review*, vol.38, no.1, January 1991, Kwang Hua, Taipei, pp.8-11.

¹⁷¹ Tsong-jyi Lin (Lin Tsong-jyi), 'The Evolution of National Identity Issues in Democratizing Taiwan', in *Memories of the Future*, 2002, pp.127-130.

series of unarmed missiles across the strait towards Taiwan.¹⁷² The Chinese government claimed they were merely military exercises, but the timing and proximity of these missiles to Taiwan was clearly intentional. According to scholars it was an attempt to intimidate Taiwan's pro-independence supporters and suppress Lee, who the Chinese government believed was steadily moving ROC foreign policy away from the 'one China' policy.¹⁷³ This 1996 Chinese missile launch was the second in what has become known as the Taiwan Strait Crisis (1995-1996) which attracted world-wide attention and it is referred to as such throughout this thesis.

In the wake of China's Tiananmen massacre in 1989, and with the 1997 Hong Kong handover to China looming, a wave of Taiwan-China separatism enveloped Taiwan. This intensified when people began travelling to China after the lifting of martial law and were able to compare and contrast their very different lived experiences and current political and economic circumstances *vis-à-vis* the Chinese on the Mainland. These experiences contributed towards the rise of a distinct sense of Taiwan nationalism, and during the 1990s increasing numbers of people on the island began to identify as Taiwanese rather than as Chinese. In his analysis of changing conceptions of

¹⁷² In mid-1995 China fired an unarmed M-9 ballistic missile which landed in close proximity to Taiwan's main seaports. It is believed these were intended as a warning to Lee Teng-hui who had made a series of 'informal diplomatic' visits to the US and South-east Asia. In 1996, just prior to the Presidential elections, a second set of missiles was fired, allegedly intending to intimidate supporters of Taiwan independence. In 1996, the US sent its seventh fleet to defend Taiwan against the Chinese missile attacks. For details on the Taiwan Strait Crisis, the reasons, and consequences the attack see Lowell Dittmer, 'Taiwan's Aim-Inhibited Quest for Identity and the China Factor', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, vol. 40, issue 1-2, 2005, pp.81-82, 84 DOI: 10.1177/0021909605052945 (accessed 9/10/2010); John F. Copper, 'The Origins of Conflict Across the Taiwan Strait: The Problem of Differences in Perceptions', *Journal of Contemporary China*, vol.6, issue 15, 1997, pp. 199-227. DOI: 10.1080/10670569708724276 (accessed 9/9/2009).

¹⁷³ Jacobs and Liu report that Lee's winning margin increased from approximately one-third to over fifty-four per cent of the vote, statistics based on extensive internal polling by the KMT during the Presidential campaign. Jacobs and Liu, 'Lee Teng-hui', *The China Quarterly*, 2007, p.386. Also Dittmer reports that the proposition that Taiwan was an 'independent sovereign state (...) resumed with a vengeance' after this missile launch. For more information on this incident and its consequences see Dittmer, 'Taiwan's Aim-Inhibited Quest', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 2005, pp.81-82, 84.

identity in Taiwan, Lin Tsong-jiyi demonstrates that, between the years 1992 and 1997, those identifying as Taiwanese increased by 13.7 per cent while Chinese identity declined by 15.2 per cent.¹⁷⁴ As a corollary to this, Bruce Jacobs notes the dramatic decrease in the number of Mainlanders in Taiwan identifying only as Chinese, from 55.6 per cent to 29.9 per cent between the years 1994 and 2000.¹⁷⁵ Jacobs attributes the rise of Taiwanese consciousness to Lee Teng-hui, the DPP, and to the Chinese government – presumably a reference to its authoritarian approach and events such as Tiananmen.¹⁷⁶ Issues of self-determination and citizenship came to the fore as notions of ‘Chinese-ness’ and ‘Taiwanese-ness’ were juxtaposed and underscored in debates about identity, and national and cultural belonging.

The rise of democratisation and Taiwanese consciousness triggered a political and cultural shift in discourses on Taiwan’s identity, which no longer revolved around the reclamation of China, but rather on the formation and legitimisation of Taiwan’s identity and its place in the world. Seeking to construct a common national identity that distinguished Taiwan from China and also equally acknowledged Taiwan’s ‘four great ethnic groups’ (*si da zuqun* 四大族群), multiculturalism was embraced by Taiwan’s political parties.¹⁷⁷ As

¹⁷⁴ Tsong-jiyi Lin (Lin Tsong-jiyi), ‘The Evolution of National Identity Issues’, in *Memories of the Future*, 2002, pp.127-130. For more information on changing conceptions of identity see Wu, ‘Romance and Bread’, *Taiwanese Political Science Review*, 2005, pp. 5-37 (in Chinese); Ho Szu-yin and Liu I-chou, ‘The Taiwanese/Chinese Identity of the Taiwan People in the 1990s’, *American Asia Review*, vol.20, no.2, 2002, pp.29-74; Chang Mau-kuei, ‘Toward an Understanding of the Sheng-chi Wen-ti in Taiwan: Focusing on Changes after Political Liberalisation’, in *Ethnicity in Taiwan: Social, Historical, and Cultural Perspectives*, Chung-min Chen, Ying-chang Chuang, and Shu-min Huang (eds.), Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, Taipei, 1994, pp.93-150.

¹⁷⁵ Ho Szu-yin and Liu I-chou, cited in Jacobs and Liu, ‘Lee Teng-hui’, *The China Quarterly*, 2007, p.392.

¹⁷⁶ Jacobs and Liu, ‘Lee Teng-hui’, *The China Quarterly*, 2007, p.392.

¹⁷⁷ These four ethnic groups comprise: aborigines, Hakka, Hoklo, and the Mainlanders (see Introduction p.13). This term was invented by the Hoklo-dominated DPP and as Makeham and Hsiao point out it was used to defuse Taiwanese-Mainlander tensions, and has become ‘a dominant frame of reference for dealing with Taiwanese ethnic and national issues’ see Makeham and Hsiao, in *Cultural, Ethnic, and Political Nationalism*, 2005, pp.4-5,144. In 1997, the Tenth Article of Constitution of the Republic of China was modified, ensuring the ROC recognises and supports multiculturalism.

the academic Wang Li-jung writes, 'multicultural citizenship'¹⁷⁸ was particularly important to the political ethos of the pro-independence DPP which, as stated, won the Taipei Mayoral election in 1994 (and subsequently the presidential election in 2000).¹⁷⁹ Under the leadership of Mayor Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁), the DPP introduced a series of reforms that endorsed this idea of multiculturalism which became a strong feature of its cultural policy and was implemented in educational and cultural institutions.¹⁸⁰ As part of this discourse on multiculturalism, the DPP promoted Taiwan's *Austronesian* origins embodied in aboriginal people and their culture.¹⁸¹ Archaeological, anthropological and linguistic evidence suggests that Taiwan's aboriginal peoples are ancestrally related to the Austronesian family group encompassing the Pacific Islands, including New Zealand, Polynesia and Melanesia; some scholars argue Taiwan is in fact the source of Austronesia.¹⁸² While these views are contested, they also attract wide support within Taiwan's pro-

¹⁷⁸ Wang Li-jung has written extensively on 'multicultural citizenship' in the context of cultural policy and identity issues. He draws on Western theories on multiculturalism and postmodernism to examine the dynamics and politics of ethnic and cultural difference in relation to Taiwan's processes of political and cultural liberalisation. See Wang Li-jung, *Towards Multiculturalism? Identity, Difference and Citizenship in Cultural Policy in Taiwan (1949-2002)*, PhD thesis, University of Warwick, June 2003; Wang Li-jung, 'Multiculturalism in Taiwan', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol.10, issue 3, Nov. 2004, pp.301-318. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1028663042000312534> (accessed 5/6/2011).

¹⁷⁹ In Nov. 2001, President Chen declared that the 'ROC is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country. Multiculturalism is a basic national policy'. See Wang, 'Multiculturalism in Taiwan', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 2004, p.301.

¹⁸⁰ For more information on the DPP's reforms in education and language see Chuen-min Huang (Huang Chuen-min), 'Fashion or Compensation: The Developments of Multicultural Education in Taiwan', in *Global Constructions of Multicultural Education: Theories and Realities*, Carl A. Grant and Joy L. Lei (eds.), Lawrence Erlbaum Assocs., New Jersey, 2001, pp. 113-130; Henning Klöter, 'Language Policy in the KMT and DPP Eras', *China Perspectives*, Nov-Dec 2004. <http://chinaperspectives.revues.org/442> (accessed 12/10/2011).

¹⁸¹ In 1998, when I was introduced to then DPP Mayor Chen Shui-bian he presented me with a gift that was an aboriginal ceramic vessel whose origins he did not know and which was clearly a symbolic gesture. Reference to Taiwan's Austronesian peoples is also made in the Introduction p.12.

¹⁸² For differing views on this proposition see: Peter Bellwood, 'Tracing Ancestral Connections Across the Pacific', in *Across Oceans and Time: Art in the Contemporary Pacific*, Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, Kaohsiung, 2007, pp.38-40; Peter Bellwood, 'Taiwan and the Prehistory of the Austronesian-speaking Peoples', *Review of Archaeology*, no. 18, 1998, pp.39-48; Robert Blust, 'The Austronesian Homeland: A Linguistic Perspective', *Asian Perspectives*, vol 26, no. 1, 1985, pp.45-67; John Edward Terrell, 'Introduction: "Austronesia" and the Great Austronesian Migration', *World Archaeology*, vol. 36, no. 4, 2004, pp.586-590. (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0043824042000303764> (accessed 5/9/2011)).

independence camp which perceives such evidence as crucial to its goal of national sovereignty.¹⁸³

Based on this idea of ethnic and cultural diversity in Taiwan, the DPP strategically deployed the concept of multiculturalism to underscore Taiwan's separateness from China and legitimise its right to national sovereignty. As a counterpoint to the KMT's 'Cultural Renaissance' in the 1960s which promoted the re-sinification of Taiwan, the DPP instigated what the media popularly described as a 'cultural revolution'¹⁸⁴ which promoted Taiwanisation (*bentuhua* 本土化).¹⁸⁵ This movement was driven by political and cultural nationalism, and was inspired by a desire for national autonomy and international recognition. It incorporated the re-writing of history text-books, the re-naming of streets, the promotion of local and aboriginal languages, and raising awareness of Taiwan's distinctive history and culture through exhibitions. Scholars have widely acknowledged Chen's role in the Taiwanisation of art and culture, and more specifically in relation to the preservation, development and promotion of Taiwan's local traditional and aboriginal heritage and art.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ On the role of aboriginals in a multicultural context see Wang, 'Multiculturalism in Taiwan', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 2004, pp.306-310.

¹⁸⁴ 'The DPP's Cultural Revolution', *China Post*, Feb. 8, 2007.

<http://www.chinapost.com.tw/detail.asp?ID=102007&GRP=i&onNews> (accessed 16/2/2011).

¹⁸⁵ *Bentuhua* can also be translated as 'localisation', 'indigenisation' and 'nativisation'. For further discussion on the definition and meaning of *bentuhua* see Makeham and Hsiao in 'Introduction' and Jacobs in *Cultural, Ethnic, and Political Nationalism*, 2005, pp.11, 18-19.

¹⁸⁶ Chih-hung Wang (Wang Chih-hung), 'The Nature and Transformation', *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly*, 2003, pp.121-186 (in Chinese); Chen, *Museum International*, 2008, pp.129-130. For more information on Chen Shui-bian's role in Taiwan's cultural development see Wang, *Towards Multiculturalism?*, PhD, 2003; Chen Hung-mian, 台灣文化結構的反省與再生 ('Self-Examination and Regeneration of the Structure of Taiwanese Culture'), *現代美術 (Modern Art)*, no. 68, 1996, TFAM, p.3 (in Chinese); Ku Wen-huie, 政治轉型過程中文化行政面臨的挑戰——以1996年臺北市立美術館館長張振宇辭職事件為例 (*Challenges Faced by Cultural Administration During Political Transition- A Case Study of the Resignation of Chang Cheng-yu, Director of Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 1996*), MA thesis, National Taipei University of Education, 2007, (in Chinese).

While the DPP promoted independence and emphasised Taiwan's 'ethnic' diversity, exemplified by the slogan 'Four Great Ethnic Groups' (四大族群),¹⁸⁷ the KMT maintained a strategic and flexible policy on Taiwan's identity. On the one hand, it acknowledged Taiwan's 'blood'¹⁸⁸ links with China while it also promoted the idea that Taiwanese people were bound by a 'community of fate', recognising that people in Taiwan might be 'ethnically' different but nevertheless shared the same national identity. This was demonstrated by the popular political slogan 'We all are Taiwanese' which both the DPP and KMT promoted,¹⁸⁹ and by the KMT's rhetoric based on 'New Taiwanese' (新台灣).¹⁹⁰ Lee called for the creation of a 'new living culture' that would recognise Taiwan's unique history and culture, building also on China's 'vast cultural traditions' and drawing on 'the quintessence of Western culture' to create what he described as a 'new Chinese culture.'¹⁹¹ While conserving the word 'Chinese', Lee's emphasis on the *new* and *living* signified an important breakthrough in KMT cultural doctrine. Drawing on Elie Kedourie's theories on nationalism Hsiao observes that the principal objective of cultural nationalism is 'to create a 'new man' by instilling a distinctive culture into those regarded as members of the nation'.¹⁹² Although it was unclear what this 'new man' should look like, both political parties set out to construct an imagined community based on the idea that Taiwan's identity was 'unique', and this was underscored in the exhibitions, *Taiwan Art 1945-1993, Quest for Identity*, and *Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Faces* presented by the TFAM.

¹⁸⁷ For an explanation of these Four Ethnic Groups see pp.59-60, fn.177.

¹⁸⁸ Lee stated 'all Chinese are compatriots of the same flesh and blood', Lee Teng-hui, *Creating the Future: Towards a New Era for the Chinese People*, GIO, Taipei, 1992, p.7.

¹⁸⁹ Hsiao, *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism*, 2000, p.172.

¹⁹⁰ This term 'New Taiwanese' was first coined in 1995 by Lee Teng-hui.

¹⁹¹ 'A Selection of 1996 Speeches by President Lee Teng-hui', Xinwenju, Taipei, 1997, in Jacobs and Liu, 'Lee Teng-hui', *The China Quarterly*, 2007, p.386.

¹⁹² Hsiao, *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism*, 2000, p.15.

Taiwan Art (1945-1993): a visual historiography

In 1993, under the directorship of Huang Kuang-nan (黃光男) (Sept. 1986-Aug. 1995), *Taiwan Art 1945-1993* (hereafter abbreviated to *Taiwan Art*) (7 August – 17 October 1993) opened, commemorating the TFAM's ten-year anniversary (fig. 1.3). Somewhat paradoxically, the Chinese title of this exhibition was *The New Face of Taiwan Art* (台灣美術新風貌), implying a distinct break from the past, in contrast to its English title *Taiwan Art 1945-1993*, which emphasises Taiwan's historical trajectory. Such a discrepancy between English and Chinese exhibition titles is common in Taiwan where museums and curators strive to appeal to domestic and international audiences. In the Chinese title, the significance of 'the new' corresponded with President Lee's call to create a 'new culture'. For example, in the exhibition catalogue's preface Director Huang boldly declares "'new" means no turning back...[a] departure from established convention...and [a] determination to march into the future.'¹⁹³ The exhibition also promised audiences a new outlook and a 'new sense of place'.¹⁹⁴ But *where* was this 'new sense of place' and how was this future to be envisioned?

Taiwan Art was a major exhibition, comprising approximately 166 works (including paintings, sculptures, and mixed media). In addition to visually mapping Taiwan's art historical trajectory, it drew attention to the culturally diverse influences that have impacted on Taiwan's identity and culture. As such it marked a radical departure from the former KMT regime's objective to eliminate 'foreign' cultural influence and forge a homogeneous Chinese identity. Although the exhibition title indicated a starting year of 1945, when the KMT arrived in Taiwan, a selection of paintings created during the period of Japanese colonisation (1895-1945) was included, albeit misleadingly under

¹⁹³ Huang Kuang-nan, 'Director's Preface', in *Taiwan Art (1945-1993)*, 1993, p.10.

¹⁹⁴ Huang in *Taiwan Art (1945-1993)*, 1993, p.10; Jim Hwang, *Free China Review*, 1994, p.53.

the category 'Post-Retrocession Artistic Development 1945-1957'.¹⁹⁵ It is unclear whether the incorporation of these first generation artists' works in the exhibition was an afterthought, or whether it was a subtle affirmation of the heterogeneous, non-Chinese elements which have influenced and shaped Taiwan's cultural identity. Selected artworks were grouped chronologically into four periods,¹⁹⁶ and thematically framed according to the main cultural trends of each period: 'Mainland Chinese' (大陸); 'foreign' (洋) referring to Japanese and Western influence; 'local' (土); and 'internationalism' (國際主義), signified by works that embodied a 'universalist' aesthetic appeal.¹⁹⁷ In reviewing this exhibition, Eleanor Heartney, a Western art critic, discusses the foregrounding of these multiple stylistic influences:

...the most striking aspect of the exhibition was the graphic way that it demonstrated how Taiwan's shifting identity has played itself out in the country's recent art history, in battles between artists adhering to various styles of realism and abstraction, all of which were essentially imported from elsewhere.¹⁹⁸

Framed within a discourse on modernisation, Taiwanisation and internationalism which were the key components of the KMT's cultural policy, *Taiwan Art* was essentially a 'new' visual historiography of Taiwan's artistic development.¹⁹⁹ Although Lee may have privately supported Taiwan self-determination,²⁰⁰ KMT policy endorsed Taiwanisation but not Taiwan

¹⁹⁵ This included Hung Rui-Lin's *Self Portrait* – a semi-realist oil painting (1923); Li Mei-Shu's painting *Autumn Scenery* (1933); and Chen Hsia-Yu's bronze sculpture entitled *Woman's Head* (1939). Maggie Pai, 'Taiwan Art 1945-1993 at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum', *Asian Art News*, Hong Kong, Jan/Feb. 1994, p.74.

¹⁹⁶ These four exhibition sub-themes included: 'Post-Retrocession Period 1945-1957'; 'The Rise of Modern Art 1958-1970'; 'The Consciousness of Taiwanese Art 1971-1982'; and the 'TFAM Opening to the Present: The Formation of an International Style 1983-1993'.

¹⁹⁷ Wang Su-fong 就「台灣美術新風貌展」探討幾個臺灣美術現代化的問題 ('Several Issues About the Modernization of Taiwan Art from the Taiwan Art 1945-1993 Exhibition'), *現代美術 (Modern Art)*, no. 50, Oct. 1993, pp.37-38 (in Chinese).

¹⁹⁸ Eleanor Heartney, 'Mixed Messages from Taipei', *Art in America*, vol.82, no.2, Feb. 1994, p.43.

¹⁹⁹ It is noteworthy that prior to this exhibition, Huang Tsai-lung (who was later the director of TFAM) organized the exhibition *Three Hundred Years of Taiwanese Art*, (台灣美術三百年) that focused on the development of Taiwanese art, spanning the Qing to the postwar era and was held in 1990 at the Taiwan Provincial Museum of Art.

²⁰⁰ Until 2007, Lee was widely considered the spiritual leader of the Taiwan independence movement until he made a public announcement that he supported re-unification and should

independence. It must be emphasised that Director Huang was appointed by the KMT-led municipal government, and while he was considered progressive²⁰¹ and supported Taiwanisation, unlike his DPP-appointed successor, Chang Chen-yu (張振宇), Huang 'held no brief for the pro-independence camp'.²⁰² Consequently, this exhibition's vision of a 'new' beginning was inevitably aligned with KMT policy and hence considerably more conservative than the subsequent exhibition, *Quest for Identity* which sought to highlight the cultural distinctiveness of Taiwan's identity.

Taiwan Art was not the first exhibition to attempt a narration of Taiwan's art history.²⁰³ As discussed in the Introduction, at the height of the 'Taiwan Studies Fever' during the early-mid 1990s, there was significant public interest in and academic research carried out on Taiwan's history. The desire to record and recount Taiwan's history was driven by Taiwanese nationalist sentiment, and it can be viewed as part of a wider global trend in postcolonial studies, which, as discussed, impacted on the Asian art field.²⁰⁴ In Taiwan, the re-examination and re-writing of history was manifest in the plethora of publications and also exhibitions, such as *Taiwan Art*, which visually

seek 'normalisation'. See *China Post*, 'Lu "Astonished" by Lee's About Turn on Taiwan Independence' 2 Feb. 2007.

<http://www.chinapost.com.tw/news/archives/front/200722/101519.htm> (accessed 13/9/2010); *China Post*, 'Chen Shouldn't Fear Dealing with China: Lee', 5 Feb 2007.

<http://www.chinapost.com.tw/news/archives/front/200725/101740.htm> (accessed 13/9/2010).

²⁰¹ Lai Ying-ying, *A Reflexive Study of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum*, PhD, 2008, (in Chinese).

²⁰² Vickers, in *Re-Writing Culture in Taiwan*, 2009, p.80. Huang was appointed to the director's position after passing the civil service exams which public servants were customarily required to do (although Chang Chen-yu did not).

²⁰³ For example, in 1990, the National Museum of Fine Arts (NTMFA) (then the Taiwan Province Museum of Fine Arts) held *Three Hundred Years of Taiwan Art* which was a major survey of artistic development in Taiwan; and in Oct.1994, the recently opened Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts (KMFA) presented *Retrospective Exhibition of Painting Development in Taiwan (1739-1980)* that comprised almost 500 paintings from the Qing dynasty to the 1980s.

²⁰⁴ This global trend in postcolonialism in art was discussed in the Introduction (p.5). In terms of its impact in Asia and on art, it is relevant to note that, in Japan, several exhibitions were organized by public museums exploring Japan's colonial history. These include *Western-Style painting of the Era in Japan, Korea and Taiwan*, held in 1992 at the Tokyo Metropolitan Teien Museum; and Oguma Eiji's seminal book, *The Boundaries of the Japanese*, published in 1998 by Shin yosha, Tokyo also inspired significant interest in the Japanese empire and its colonies.

chronicled Taiwan's artistic development.²⁰⁵ Within these sweeping visual historiographies, Taiwan's pioneering Japanese-trained first generation artists attracted by far the most attention with numerous survey exhibitions and artist retrospectives, as well as articles and books published on their work.²⁰⁶ The popularity of artists, including Chen Cheng-po (陳澄波) (fig. 1.4), Yang San-lang (楊三郎) and Li Shih-chiao (李石樵), whose works were represented in the exhibition, was evident in the high prices they commanded in the art market,²⁰⁷ and by the number of private museums and foundations established to commemorate several of them.²⁰⁸ In contrast to the traditional Chinese monochromatic ink and wash paintings of make-believe landscapes routinely practised on the Mainland, these oil paintings' more realistic impressions of Taiwan's local people and landscapes were seen to express an emergent *Taiwanese* consciousness. Moreover, as products of Japan's colonial legacy, their works signified a critical juncture in Taiwan's history, from a Chinese

²⁰⁵ For example, *Artist* magazine produced the *Taiwan Fine Arts Series* which focused on the historical development of Taiwan art. For information on publications produced on Taiwan's artistic development see the Sources section in the Introduction (pp. 22-36 especially).

²⁰⁶ Exhibitions featuring works by these artists include: *Retrospective Exhibition of Early Western Art* (1990) at the TFAM; and the KMFA's *Retrospective Exhibition of Painting Development in Taiwan* (1994). Artist retrospectives included: Yang San-lang (1990 & 1995), Chen Cheng-po (1992), Lin Yu-shan (1991), Liu Chin-tang (1994), Chin Jun-tso (1994), Ho Te-Lai (1994), Chen Hui-kun (1995) and Chen Chih-chi (1995). Art publishing houses, such as *Artist* played an instrumental role in raising the level of awareness in Taiwan about these first generation artists and they published a series of artist monographs and articles based on this period which were compiled in the *Taiwan Fine Arts Series* published in Chinese.

²⁰⁷ As the Hong Kong-based art curator and gallerist, Johnson Chang (Chang Tsong-zung 張頌仁 - see Chapter Eight pp.393-394) states, 'the people in Taiwan are interested not only in buying art, but also buying a part of their own history.' Chang Tsong-zung, 'Sotheby's Taipei-Modern Chinese Fine Art in March 1992', *Arts of Asia*, July/Aug 1992, p.113. In Sotheby's auction in Taipei in March 1992 the vast majority of works sold at this auction were by Taiwan's first generation artists and despite these artists' relatives allegations that many of these paintings were fakes, according to Sotheby's seventy-seven out of eighty-two lots sold in this auction which was viewed as a landmark sale. See Robert Christensen, 'Taiwan Tradition in Transition', *Art News*, vol. 91, no. 6, Summer 1992, pp.92-93; Tuyet Nguyet and Stephen Mark Breiter, 'Sotheby's Taipei-Modern Chinese Fine Art in March 1992', *Arts of Asia*, July/Aug. 1992, pp.111-116; *Asian Art News* 'Chinese and Asian Markets on Solid Ground', *Asian Art News*, May/June 1992, pp.52-54.

²⁰⁸ During the first half of the 1990s, a number of privately run Foundations and Commemorative museums dedicated to the work of several first generation local painters were established, such as the Yang San-lang Museum which opened in 1991, and the Li Shih-chiao gallery and foundation which was established in 1992.

Nationalist to a Taiwan-centred perspective, which recognised Japan's colonial role in Taiwan. It could be argued that the inclusion of Japanese-trained artists in this exhibition was underpinned by a political sub-text: a means by which Taiwan's disconnect from China was subtly reinforced.²⁰⁹ These artists' Japanese-mediated, French impressionist-inspired oil paintings not only called attention to the presence and cultural influence of the Japanese in Taiwan, but also projected an image of cosmopolitanism, progressiveness and cultural 'uniqueness'. This ideology is reflected in Huang Kuang-nan's statement:

...Because of Taiwan's historical background [of Japanese occupation], the arts of Taiwan differ markedly from their Mainland Chinese counterparts [...] Taiwan has evolved from an isolated island in East Asia to a developed nation.²¹⁰

The exhibition was widely criticised in the local and international media for its historicist approach, as well as its conservative and seemingly arbitrary curatorial selection.²¹¹ Despite its promise to present a 'new face' of Taiwan art, less than a quarter of the works in the exhibition were made in the 1990s.²¹² In the museum's defence, one TFAM staff member explains that the museum's intention was to focus on 'expressions of modernisation' rather than on contemporary art exclusively.²¹³ Wu Mali's dazzling gold-plated *Daihatsu Car* was amongst the few new works and one of a very small number of installations (fig. 1.5). This, along with Mei Dean-E's *Objects in the Mirror are Closer than they Appear* (1990); and Yang Mao-lin's earlier painting *On the Spot of Murdering Kun* (1986),²¹⁴ featured in the final exhibition category 'TFAM

²⁰⁹ It is relevant to note that Lee Teng-hui who grew up under Japanese rule and studied in Japan, had a strong affinity for this country and his pro-Japanese sentiments were well known. See Chapter Two p.110.

²¹⁰ Huang Kuang-nan, 'Foreword', in *Retrospective Exhibition of Early Western Art in Taiwan*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 1990, p.3.

²¹¹ Based on my research, a sample of critical reviews of this exhibition include Jim Hwang, *Free China Review*, 1994, pp.58-61; Maggie Pai, *Asian Art News*, 1994, pp.74-5; Wang, Su-fong, 'Several Issues', *Modern Art*, 1993, pp.36-49 (in Chinese).

²¹² The most recent works (nine out of twenty-nine works in the 1980s category) were created in 1992 and one work was dated 1992-3.

²¹³ Wang Su-fong, 'Several Issues', *Modern Art*, 1993, pp.37-38 (in Chinese). This exhibition reportedly attracted 100,000 visitors over its two month period, Jim Hwang, *Free China Review*, 1994, p.61.

²¹⁴ See Chapter Four pp.199-200.

Opening to the Present: The Formation of an International Style 1983-1993'. This category was both praised as the 'liveliest' section in the exhibition and criticised for its eclectic curatorial approach.²¹⁵

Heartney remarked that 'many artists were included more for [their] clout than [their] quality'²¹⁶ which, one can assume, referred to the senior generation of artists whose age and experience often confer greater status in Taiwan where they are celebrated as 'national assets'.²¹⁷ Since its opening, the TFAM had acquired numerous works by Taiwan's first generation and Mainland artists who arrived in Taiwan post-1949.²¹⁸ In 1993, Huang asserted that the acquisition of senior artists' works has 'always been our policy'.²¹⁹ Hence, it is worth noting that, when Chang Chen-yu succeeded Huang as director, he rejected the museum's long-standing policy and acquired no further ink paintings by senior artists for the collection during his short tenure. In his view 'the TFAM should be a centre for contemporary art, and these ink paintings and calligraphy works belong in the National History Museum'.²²⁰ This quip was, in part, directed at Huang Kuang-nan, an ink painter, who subsequently became director of the National History Museum. Chang's key mission was to acquire local artists' works and 'the best of the younger generation'.²²¹ Only one exhibition by a senior artist was presented during Chang's tenure.²²²

²¹⁵ Heartney, 'Mixed Messages from Taipei', *Art in America*, 1994, p.44; Pai, *Asian Art News*, 1994, p.74.

²¹⁶ Heartney, 'Mixed Messages', *Art in America*, 1994, p.44.

²¹⁷ Huang Kuang-nan, 'Notes About Our Time - Preface for 1993 Collection Catalogue', *TFAM Collection Catalogue, 1992-3*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, p.3.

²¹⁸ These included Huang Chun-pi (黃君璧) who was Madam Chiang Kai-shek's teacher and whether this artist's work was acquired on the basis of his links to the KMT is unclear. Also works by Fu Chuan-Fu (傅狷夫) and Lin Yu-shan (林玉山) were actively acquired by the museum and they were displayed in artist retrospectives. Exhibitions presented by the TFAM of these artists' works included: *Masterpieces of Huang Chun-pi* (1987), *Masterpieces of Fu Chuan-Fu* (1989), and a *Retrospective by Lin Yu-shan* (1991).

²¹⁹ Huang Kuang-nan, in *TFAM Collection Catalogue, 1992-3*, p.3.

²²⁰ Chang Chen-yu, Interview with Author, 1995, Taipei.

²²¹ See Yang Wen-I, Interview with Author 1995, Taipei.

²²² This exhibition presented work by Liao Chi-chun.

The curatorial selection of works in *Taiwan Art* stimulated significant interest and debate as contemporary artists in Taiwan had previously few opportunities to exhibit their works when the museum and gallery sector was still developing. Originally a four member curatorial team was appointed.²²³ However, since they were appointed as consultants, the TFAM ultimately made the final selection which was conservative based on pre-existing works in the TFAM's collection, many of which had been donated or had won prizes.²²⁴ In her essay in the exhibition catalogue, the independent art critic and curator Victoria Lu (陸蓉之, Lu Rong-ze) was highly critical of the TFAM's inability to entrust the appointed team of experts with their curatorial task, remarking that 'hopes (for a new era of respect) were squandered' as the museum 'could not bring itself to allow those professionals responsible for running the exhibition to perform their duties.'²²⁵ However, as a local art critic responded, rather than a 'lack of interest or goodwill, time, expertise and sufficient scholarly research'²²⁶ were the main curatorial issues.

The politics of curatorship and the role of 'the West' in Taiwan art

In the early 1990s, the profession of curatorship in Taiwan was still in its infancy. This has been attributed to a number of factors, including that art museums were a relatively new phenomenon; and there was a lack of professional training, art education and art criticism in Taiwan.²²⁷ Although a

²²³ This curatorial team included academics, independent art curators and critics: Wang Hsiung, Huang Hai-ming, Li Meng-ling, and L. Kinholz (as the 'four-member consulting team') and Lin Hsing-yu, Lu Ching-fu, Jiang Hsun, and Victoria Lu were the catalogue essayists.

²²⁴ Huang Kuang-nan defends this selection as he says these 'wish lists' amounted to over 300 artists and only 106 artists were chosen and out of a total of 166 works he states only sixty-seven works came from the museum's collection, while the rest were on loan. Huang Kuang-nan, in *Taiwan Art (1945-1993)*, 1993, p.10; Jim Hwang, 'The New Face', *Free China Review*, 1994, pp. 53, 59.

²²⁵ Lu, in *Taiwan Art (1945-1993)*, 1993, p.71.

²²⁶ Pai, 'Taiwan Art 1945-1993', *Asian Art News*, 1994, p.75.

²²⁷ It has been argued that during their formative years, the three major museums focused on their infrastructural development. Wang states this fact, along with the lack of training and government funding inhibited the development and professionalism of curatorial practice. In addition Hsu Wen-chin remarks the lack of Western art history courses in Taiwan's universities has also been an issue. Hsu states in 1994, no university or college in Taiwan offered an undergraduate programme in Western art history. Although there have been

number of TFAM personnel had studied overseas,²²⁸ they were employed as civil servants with primarily administrative tasks.²²⁹ Wang Jia-ji (王嘉驥, alias Jason Wang),²³⁰ an independent curator, art writer and academic, claims that 'the curator is just a title on the name card'²³¹ at the TFAM, and a former TFAM staff member claims that there was a lack of respect and understanding of the role curators play.²³² By 2000, concerns regarding the lack of local curatorial expertise were addressed by the TFAM when it instituted, as part of the Taipei Biennial, a local-international collaborative curatorial partnership, described as a 'mentoring programme'²³³ for local curators (see Chapter Seven).

Until this time, however, exhibitions were generally outsourced. By re-assigning its curatorial responsibilities to external parties the museum would be less accountable.²³⁴ For competitions and major international exhibitions,

courses in Chinese art history since 1949, she says less than five per cent of the total graduate courses offered by the two main art universities focused on Western and international art generally. Wang Jia-ji, 台灣的位置—從策展現象的興起看台灣當代藝術 ('Taiwan's Position: Taiwan Contemporary Art and the Rise of Curatorship'), 典藏藝術 (Art & Collection), no. 101, Feb. 2002, pp.126-129 (in Chinese); Hsu Wen-chin, 'The Necessity of the Application' in *Symposium on the Role and Function*, 1994, pp.133-134.

²²⁸ Since 1989, the Chief Curators of the TFAM Exhibition Department have all received an overseas education including Shih Rae-jen (1989/4-1992/3); Pan Tai-fang (1992/3-1996/3); Lee Yu-jin (1996/3-1998/1); Chen Shu-ling (1998/1-2002/2); and Chang Fang-wei (2002/2-) who is now Director of the Biennial and International Projects Office.

²²⁹ The term 'curator' was nevertheless used in English translations to refer to the Museum Director and to the Chief Curator of the Exhibitions Department the latter of which in Chinese is more accurately translated as 'Exhibition Group Leader' (*zhanlanzu zuzhang* 展覽組組長).

²³⁰ Wang Jia-ji is also referred to as Wang Chia-chi.

²³¹ Wang Jia-ji, 'Taiwan's Position: the Rise of Curatorship', 2001, pp.126-129 (in Chinese).

²³² Yang Wen-I was employed as an Assistant Researcher at the TFAM after completing an MA in European and East Asian Art History at the Heidelberg University where she subsequently completed her PhD after resigning from the TFAM in 1996. Yang played a key role in the management of the following international exhibitions: Taiwan's representation in the 1995 Venice Biennale; *Identities: Contemporary Art from Australia*; and *Art Taiwan* the latter of which opened in Sydney in 1995. She says compared to Australia and Europe, in Taiwan the curator has no autonomy as they have to work with the bureaucracy and decisions are made on higher levels. Yang Wen-I, Interview with the Author, 1995, 2009, Taipei. Also see Yang Wen-I, in *Final Report of the 1998 Chinese Curator Conference*, conference paper, Taiwan National Museum of Fine Arts, 1998, pp.23-31.

²³³ See Chapter Seven pp.348-349. This curatorial model was based on collaboration between a curator from outside Taiwan and a local curator.

²³⁴ Leon Parossien was the Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Taipei (2001-2003). He has commented on the tendency of museums in Taiwan to abdicate curatorial responsibility. Leon Parossien, 'Some Issues Relating to Museums in Taiwan and Mainland

such as the Venice Biennale, works were selected by a jury that generally comprised at least one 'foreign expert', most often from Euro-America or Japan, which the museum believed would add import, authority and 'credibility' to the exhibition, and help expand the TFAM's international profile.²³⁵ For Taiwan's inaugural representation at the 1995 Venice Biennale, the foreigners on the jury, who had been selected by the TFAM,²³⁶ allegedly controlled the selection, disregarding Taiwan's 'more gentle and reserved' jurors.²³⁷ As an indication of the extent of anti-Western sentiment generated around this exhibition, one local art critic questioned the ability of these international judges with their 'foreign' outlook to understand Taiwan's needs.²³⁸

This anti-Western sentiment was also manifest in the seminal essay entitled, *Western Art Made in Taiwan: A Critique of Taiwan Modern Art* (西方美術台灣製造—台灣現代美術的批判), written by Ni Tsai-chin (倪再沁), a painter, art writer, and environmentalist. Ni was a leading advocate of *bentuhua* (Taiwanisation), and he subsequently became director of the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Art in Taichung (1997-2000).²³⁹ This article,

China', lecture, Australian National University, Canberra, 13 Oct. 2010; and Leon Parossien in conversation with the Author, 2010, Canberra.

²³⁵ Lu Ching-fu, 'Toward a Broader, Deeper Biennial', *The Taipei Biennial of Contemporary Art 1994*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 1994, p.18. Lu, who himself was a jury member, notes that members of the jury from overseas comprised sixty per cent of the jury in the first Biennial compared with forty per cent in the second Biennial in 1994.

²³⁶ The Jurors included: Wolfgang Becker, Francoise Chatel, Enrico Pedrini, and local curators Lee Ming-ming, Lee Charng-juinn, and Yang Wen-l.

²³⁷ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei. Also see Hsieh Tung-shan,

從威尼斯雙年展談台灣藝術的未來 ('From the Venice Biennale Discussing the Future of Taiwan Art'), 雄獅美術 (*Lion Art*), no. 293, July 1995, pp.43-46 (in Chinese); Gao Miao,

「威尼斯雙年展引爆藝術圈論戰—官方、民間各說各話」 ('Controversy in the Art World Over the Venice Biennale – Officials and the General Public Express Different Views'), 典藏藝術 (*Art & Collection*), no. 32, May 1995, pp.172-176 (in Chinese).

²³⁸ Hu Yung-fen, 期待自我的發聲—縱觀台灣參加威尼斯雙年展事件始末 ('Looking Forward to Expressing Ourselves – A Comprehensive Look at Taiwan's Participation in the Venice Biennale'), 雄獅美術 (*Lion Art*), no. 292, June 1995, pp.60-62 (in Chinese).

²³⁹ Ni's article 西方美術．台灣製造——台灣現代美術的批判 ('Western Art Made in Taiwan - A Critique of Taiwan Modern Art'), was originally published in *Lion Art*'s twentieth anniversary edition *Lion Art*, no. 242, April 1991, pp.114-133 (in Chinese). It was later re-printed

first published in 1991 in Taiwan's leading art magazine, *Lion Art* (雄獅美術), sparked a major, protracted debate in the art field and it is referred to throughout this thesis, along with the book *Taiwan Consciousness in Taiwan Art* (台灣藝術中的台灣意識). In *Western Art Made in Taiwan* Ni seeks to trace the development of Taiwan art and, ultimately, provoke debate and engender Taiwanese or 'native' identity consciousness in the art field. In this narrative on Taiwan's art history Ni claims that, since Japanese occupation, artists have effectively appropriated external and 'foreign' artistic influences without considering the 'soil', or the local context in which the work was created. He concludes that Taiwan has developed a 'dependency complex' on the West, and he promulgates the need for artists to devote more attention to Taiwan's native culture instead of 'avoiding reality' and 'blindly' following Western art trends.

Essentially, Ni and his nativist supporters were against 'art for art's sake' believing that art served a purpose which, at that point in time, was to reflect Taiwan's environment and forge a distinctive *Taiwanese* artistic identity. In this highly polemic review, Ni criticised artists whose works he considered 'self-indulgent', introspective, and overly preoccupied with aesthetics, and had thus 'lost their deeper meaning' and relevance to Taiwan. His attack was directed mainly at non-figurative abstract artists whose works he believed lacked political or social relevance; and at overseas-trained artists who worked in media deemed 'Western'. This included installation and digital art, and, in Chapters Three and Five, I examine how artists Mei Dean-E and Wu Mali responded to these criticisms.²⁴⁰ In 1995, during an interview I conducted with Ni, he more circumspectly observes that 'art is like a language' which one must 'translate', incorporating the 'local accent' for the consumption of local

在台灣藝術中的台灣意識 (*Taiwan Consciousness in Taiwan Art*), Ye Yu-jing (ed.), 雄獅美術出版 (Lion Art Publishing), Taipei, 1994, pp.37-88 (in Chinese).

²⁴⁰ These artists included the *Tungfang* and *Wu Yue* abstract expressionists in the 1950s and 1960s, and some contemporary non-figurative painters which he classifies as the 'New Literati and Zen Painters'. Ni, in *Taiwan Consciousness in Taiwan Art*, 1994, pp. 61-4, 74-80, 79.

audiences. He explained that his criticisms were directed at those artists in Taiwan who 'just digest foreign influences, and do not translate them'.²⁴¹ Here, Ni refers to language in an aesthetic context in relation to the artwork, but it was also used more broadly to refer to writing (in art as well as in other disciplines) which employed Western phrases and theories to examine a particular phenomenon or development in Taiwan. This approach was often criticised in Taiwan because some consider it does not accurately reflect the local particularities of Taiwan's identity.

It can be argued that Ni's calling on artists to return to their 'native roots' and to re-define their identity reflected a more widespread concern about the effects of modernisation and globalisation experienced by many colonised Asian countries, and as part of a global trend in postmodern and postcolonial studies.²⁴² As Roland Robertson reminds us, the impact of Western imperialism in both China²⁴³ and Japan, for example, engendered intense anti-Western sentiment in parts of Asia, as people began searching for integration-promoting national identities.²⁴⁴ In Taiwan, the desire to define and assert its national identity was not only driven by the need for sovereign recognition, but it was also part of a wider postcolonial process of decolonisation experienced by many non-Western countries. Decolonisation is generally defined as the need to question and contest the effects of foreign colonialism and Western hegemonic power.²⁴⁵ It is important to note, however, that

²⁴¹ Ni Tsai-chin, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taichung. During this discussion Ni was at pains to point out that *bentu* should not be defined by the artist's 'ethnic' background, or whether they studied overseas. Ni himself was a *waishengren*, and studied in France; and he also later lived and worked in Beijing in the early 2000s. See Chapter Eight p.414.

²⁴² This trend was discussed in the Introduction.

²⁴³ For example, in China, this anti-Western sentiment was manifest in the Opium Wars (1839–1842, 1856–1860) and the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1901).

²⁴⁴ Roland Robertson, 'After Nostalgia? Willful Nostalgia and the Phases of Globalization', in *Theories of Modernity and Postmodernity*, Bryan Turner (ed.), London, 1990, pp.45–61.

²⁴⁵ For further analysis of decolonisation in a Taiwan and general context see: Kuan-hsing Chen (Chen Kuan-hsing) 'The Decolonization Question', *Trajectories*, 1998, pp.3–47; Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds.), *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, Routledge, 1995 (and especially the Introduction and essays by Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said and Trinh T. Minh-ha).

Taiwanese nationalists were often willing to accept the more positive aspects of Japan's colonisation of Taiwan (as distinct from the Koreans, for example), and they did not necessarily disapprove of Taiwan's continuing relationship with the United States. In Taiwan's context, decolonisation centred on the rehabilitation of Taiwan's aboriginal and local histories, cultures and identities, and this was viewed as a critical component of the decolonisation process.

Ni's provocative article became the subject of considerable debate within Taiwan's art community and over the next twenty-two months, *Lion Art* published a series of commentaries, critiques and essays by local artists, curators and critics, including by Mei Dean-E, which collectively responded to Ni's article. A selection was compiled in the aforementioned book, *Taiwan Consciousness in Taiwan Art*, published in 1994. These articles reflect a diversity of political and cultural views on Taiwan consciousness, which was typically discussed in relation to dichotomies based on nativism/foreignness, localism/cosmopolitanism, and tradition/modernity. Sociologist, Hsiao A-chin (蕭阿勤), describes how these notions of identity and cultural essentialism were based on a 'politics of cultural uniqueness', defined as an expression of political and cultural 'difference'.²⁴⁶ This ideology of cultural uniqueness was vital to the construction and legitimisation of the idea of the Taiwan nation, which many believed must be reinstated. The art curator, writer and current Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Taipei, Shih Rae-jen (石瑞仁, alias JJ Shih),²⁴⁷ candidly remarked during an interview, 'there is underground xenophobia against the West and overt xenophobia against China'. In his view, artists and local curators are under pressure to define Taiwan's identity because 'they are concerned they might lose their status and

²⁴⁶ Hsiao, *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism*, 2000, pp. 2, 18-20.

²⁴⁷ Shih Rae-jen is also referred to as Shih Rae-ren and Se Rae-ren. He most often uses his alias JJ Shih in his English-based writing, and this version of his name is most often used in this thesis unless it is a Chinese article whereupon he is referred to as Shih Rae-jen (JJ Shih).

identity if China were to re-take Taiwan'.²⁴⁸ To an outsider, this comment may seem odd, even melodramatic, but during this period of heightened nationalism, when the Taiwan Strait Crisis prevailed, the need to establish and define Taiwan's identity gained impetus, and this was underscored in the 1996 exhibition *Quest for Identity*.

1996 Taipei Biennial: The Quest for Identity

The Quest for Identity (hereafter *Quest for Identity*) was the first curated Taipei Biennial (fig. 1.6).²⁴⁹ In contrast to *Taiwan Art*, this exhibition focused predominantly on contemporary art, and it focused on the theme of subjectivity, as its Chinese title, *Subjectivity in Taiwan Art* (台灣藝術主體性) indicates. Although the English title implied a more open-ended search for identity, both exhibition titles underscored the need to locate and define a new identity which would enable Taiwan to achieve 'political and cultural autonomy'.²⁵⁰ As noted, Chang Chen-yu was the first director appointed to the TFAM by the newly elected DPP in September 1995 and his pro-independence leanings were well-known. According to art critic, Lu Ching-fu-(呂清夫), Chang embraced the DPP's slogan 'independent identity for Taiwan' and set out to

²⁴⁸ JJ Shih, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

²⁴⁹ In 1992 the two alternating exhibitions, *Contemporary Art Trends in the ROC* and *An Exhibition of Contemporary Chinese Sculpture in the Republic of China* were amalgamated into the *Taipei Biennial of Contemporary Art* (now known as the *Taipei Biennial*). In 1992 and 1994 participating artists were selected through an open judging process in which artists' works (represented by slides). In 1994 works were selected by a preliminary and final jury, the latter of which included two foreign experts from Japan and Germany. The preliminary jury included: Wang Hsiu-hsiung, Lu Ching-fu, Victoria Lu, Huang Hai-ming and the final jury comprised: Wang Hsiu-hsiung, Lu Ching-fu, Lin Hsing-yue, Lee Ming-ming, Helmut Friedel, Honma Masayoshi. See *The Taipei Biennial of Contemporary Art 1994*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 1994; also [www.taipeibiennial.org/2008/Content Page/Contents](http://www.taipeibiennial.org/2008/ContentPage/Contents) (accessed 18/3/2010); and Wang Hsiu-hsiung 'Some Afterthoughts from the Jury of Taipei Biennial of Contemporary Art', in *Taipei Biennial of Contemporary Art 1994*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 1994, pp.10-11. In addition, Huang's article calling for change from the open-style competition is also relevant. Huang Hai-ming, 'Observations and Suggestions Regarding the Taipei Biennial of Contemporary Art, 1992', in *Taipei Biennial of Contemporary Art, 1992*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 1992, pp.8-12.

²⁵⁰ Liu Bao-guey, 'Preface' in *1996 Taipei Biennial: Quest for Identity*, TFAM, Taipei, 1996, p.6.

forge an 'independent identity of Taiwanese art'²⁵¹ through the TFAM's exhibitions and collecting programmes. Chang believed that art served a political purpose and he argued that artists had a social responsibility to help re-build Taiwan's identity. He also believed the TFAM had a 'duty' to 'take a leading role in the search for identity'.²⁵² This is exemplified in his statement:

...We have learnt so much from Chinese and Western culture, but now it is time to become more aware of ourselves ... to be less introverted and to assert our confidence. In Taiwan we have a political crisis ... we need to define our identity and create our own culture ... artists can help us do this.²⁵³

Although Chang's appointment²⁵⁴ and views were controversial and his tenure short-lived, at the time his comments resonated strongly in Taiwan's visual art community. *Quest for Identity* is widely regarded as a landmark exhibition which has had an enduring influence on the visual art field in Taiwan.²⁵⁵

In the context of museological practice, *Quest for Identity* marked an important paradigm shift. It dispensed both with the competitive judging system, conventional selection criteria (based on age, academic credentials, ethnic background, artistic standing and medium), and with the museum's customary invitation to a foreign guest to join the selection panel. Instead, six external local art professionals were each assigned curatorial responsibility to select works for each of the exhibition themes.²⁵⁶ The privileging of local curators in

²⁵¹ See Lu Ching-fu, 'Tendencies Toward Local Consciousness, Individualism and Edification in Art', in *Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Faces*, TFAM, 1997, p.12.

²⁵² Chang Chen-yu, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

²⁵³ Chang Chen-yu, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

²⁵⁴ Unlike his KMT-appointed predecessor, Huang Kuang-nan, who was an experienced civil servant, Chang was a painter without museum management experience, and had not been required to sit the civil service examinations as had other TFAM directors. Following the public outcry surrounding the fact he did not complete the civil service examinations the city government accordingly re-defined and formalised the selection criteria for the position of TFAM director. See Lai Ying-ying, *A Reflexive Study of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum*, PhD, 2008, (in Chinese). It is noteworthy that prior to his appointment, a retrospective of Chang's works was held at the TFAM (9 April-8 May 1994). The exhibition was entitled *Chen-Yu Chang Retrospect on Neo-Humanism 1975-1994*.

²⁵⁵ For example, the curator of Taiwan's representation at the Venice Biennale in 2009, Chang Fang-wei, referred to this exhibition as a key conceptual influence in the development of her exhibition entitled *Foreign Affairs*. See Chapter Seven pp.379-381.

²⁵⁶ This curatorial panel comprised art historians, scholars, art critics and curators and they are listed according to each of the themes they curated: 'Genealogy and Archives' (Hsiao

this exhibition was in part a response to the perceived dominance of Western jurors in Taiwan's representation in the 1995 Venice Biennale, of which Chang was also critical.²⁵⁷ Wu Mali, a participant in this particular biennale, observes 'Chang didn't like the selection because it was from a foreign perspective. Although trained in America when he came to the TFAM he wanted only Taiwanese'.²⁵⁸

This exhibition set out to 'build a body of Taiwanese art' that reflected Taiwan's 'original' local culture and emphasised the culturally distinctive aspects of Taiwan's people, and their history and culture.²⁵⁹ The implementation of a thematic structure enabled the participation of established and emerging artists in Taiwan working across a vast range of styles and media. As the Acting Museum Director, Liu Bao-guey (劉寶貴) stated, '[after the lifting of martial law] the facts prove that ... a single standard cannot serve the ... chaotic yet unusually rich art of today, which is unrestricted to any form'.²⁶⁰ Here, Liu is clearly seeking to draw attention to the fact that Taiwan is no longer a one-party Chinese state, but has transformed into a democracy which embraces cultural diversity.

In accordance with the DPP's cultural doctrine on multicultural citizenship, works by two aboriginal artists were included, marking the first time

Chong-ray); 'Identity and Memories' (Tsai Hai-ming); 'Our Environment and City Life' (Lu Kuang); 'Visual Dialogue' (Lee Chun-hsien); and 'Sexuality and Power' (Hsieh Tung-shan). In addition, Lo Chih-cheng was responsible for curating 'Experiencing Taipei', a community participatory project.

²⁵⁷ For Chang's reactions see: Gao Miao, 'Controversy in the Art World', *Art & Collection*, 1995, p.172 (in Chinese). For Chang's discussion on modernism and his criticism of 'art for art's sake' see Chang Chen-yu, 破除(本土/國際) 雙重迷思的魔咒 ('To Break the Spell of the Myths of "Local" and "International"'), *現代美術 (Modern Art)*, no. 65, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, Apr. 1996, pp.43-51 (in Chinese); Chang Chen-yu, 現代主義之死與台灣藝壇的亂象 ('The Death of Modernism and the Chaos in the Taiwan Art Field'), *現代美術 (Modern Art)*, no.65, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, Apr. 1996, pp.52-3 (in Chinese).

²⁵⁸ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

²⁵⁹ Liu Bao-guey, in *Quest for Identity*, 1996, p6.

²⁶⁰ Liu Bao-guey, in *Quest for Identity*, 1996, p.6. Liu became the Acting Director after Chang resigned in 1996 (after it was alleged he misappropriated museum funds). Liu was equally committed to Chang's search for Taiwan identity which is evident in her comments.

contemporary aboriginal artists' works were shown at the TFAM, or any other state art museum. Prior to Lee Teng-hui's rule, museums in Taiwan typically ignored Taiwan's aboriginals, or as Vickers notes, they were used to promote the KMT's 'progressive' assimilation policies based on Chinese culture.²⁶¹ It is important to note here that, although the terms 'native' and 'indigenous' are often employed in visual art discourse, they do not necessarily refer specifically to Taiwan's aboriginals or their culture. For example, in 1993, Director Huang stated: '[Taiwan has] indigenous values which sets the Chinese culture here apart from the Chinese culture on the Mainland'.²⁶² Here, the term 'indigenous' (本土) is used in a generic sense, referring to Taiwan's local culture rather than to its aboriginal cultural heritage or visual practices.

While the overwhelming majority of artists in *Quest for Identity* were of Chinese descent,²⁶³ the inclusion of two aboriginal sculptors, Er Ge (峨格) and Hagu (哈古),²⁶⁴ marked a critical turning point. *Quest for Identity* was the first exhibition to feature Taiwan contemporary aboriginal art in a major public art museum.²⁶⁵ With the rise of the DPP and Taiwanese nationalism, aboriginal histories, culture and art began to attract increasing political and cultural attention. For example, from the early 1990s, several public and private museums were established, such as the Shung Ye Museum of Formosan Aboriginities that opened in 1994 in Taipei. However, as scholars have demonstrated, where aboriginal art featured in museological displays, it was generally displayed within an historical and ethnographic context.²⁶⁶ Prior to

²⁶¹ Vickers, in *Re-writing Culture in Taiwan*, 2009, p.87.

²⁶² See Huang, in *TFAM Collection Catalogue*, 1992-3, p.1.

²⁶³ That is, Hakka, Hoklo and Mainlanders.

²⁶⁴ These artists are from the Paiwan and Beinan tribes respectively.

²⁶⁵ It must be noted, however, that in 1991 the small private gallery associated with the art publishing house, *Lion Art* presented some of Hagu's works. See Mei-chen Tseng, 'The Great Journey: In Pursuit of the Ancestral Realm', in *The Great Journey*, KMFA, 2010, p.22.

²⁶⁶ Stevan Harrell and Lin Yu-shih, 'Aesthetics and Politics in Taiwan's Aboriginal Contemporary Arts', NATSA Annual Conference, University of California, Santa Cruz, 3 July 2006 (n.p). <http://faculty.washington.edu/stevehar/NATSA%20aboriginal%20arts.pdf> (accessed 10/12/2010); Vickers, in *Re-writing Culture in Taiwan*, 2009; Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese?*, 2004.

Quest for Identity, the only other Taiwan aboriginal exhibition at the TFAM was *The Cultural Artefacts of Taiwan Aborigines* (1984) which, as the title suggests, focused on the historical legacy of aboriginal culture. As artist and writer Chen Yin-wei (陳英偉) remarks, the fact two contemporary aboriginal artists were selected in *Quest for Identity* demonstrated an acceptance within the museum of aboriginal art as contemporary 'pure art' (純藝術) as distinct from to cultural artefact, folk art or craft.²⁶⁷ Since *Quest for Identity* opened in 1996, several exhibitions of contemporary aboriginal art have been organised by public art museums, including the Kaohsiung Fine Arts Museum (KMFA) which has presented a series of exhibitions featuring contemporary Taiwan aboriginal art.²⁶⁸ However, as I have noted elsewhere, in these exhibitions aboriginal artists' works are often framed within an Austronesian paradigm, which the DPP has traditionally promoted as part of its campaign to promote Taiwan independence.²⁶⁹

Quest for Identity was clearly underscored by a political agenda, which was to demonstrate Taiwan's ethnic, cultural, and historical distinctiveness from China based on Taiwan's Austronesian origins. This was visually articulated in a large, wall-based illustrated timeline, strategically placed at the beginning of the exhibition, which traced Taiwan's historical trajectory from the Austronesian period to the post-martial law era. The art historian Hsiao

²⁶⁷ Chen Yin-wei, 從（一九九六 雙年展）中檢視台灣的當代文化情感與現實策略之社會屬性 ('The 1996 Biennial - Observing Taiwan Contemporary Art and Culture and the Realities and Strategies'), 藝術家 (*Artist*), no. 43, Sept. 1996, pp. 350-352; also Chen Yin-wei, 認同記憶? 記憶認同 ('Sharing Memories - Memory and Identity'), 現代美術 (*Modern Art*), no. 67, Aug. 1996, pp.9-11 (in Chinese).

²⁶⁸ In 2007, the KMFA established 'The Austronesian Contemporary Art Development Plan' which encompasses an artist database, an acquisition program, seminars, artist residencies, and a series of exhibitions. These exhibitions included *Art in the Contemporary Pacific - The Great Journey: In Pursuit of the Ancestral Realm* (2009), which brought together, for the first time, works by Taiwan contemporary aboriginal artists with indigenous artists from New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. For more information on this exhibition see my article 'Navigating "Austronesia": Contemporary Indigenous Art from Taiwan and the Pacific', *Art Monthly*, no. 232, Aug. 2010, pp.45-48.

²⁶⁹ The ways aboriginal art has been politicised in exhibitions and framed in an Austronesian context is examined in my article 'Navigating "Austronesia"', *Art Monthly*, Aug. 2010, pp.45-48.

Chong-ray (蕭瓊瑞) who curated this section entitled, *Genealogy and Archives*, argued that this timeline created a 'foundation stone' for further research, and helped audiences understand 'the truth' of Taiwan's history. Hsiao emphasises that he did not wish to engage in identity politics, but rather to present a 'neutral and specific' perspective on 'the mainstream' of Taiwan's history.²⁷⁰ The timeline provided a context for a visual display of aboriginal archaeological and cultural relics and archival materials, and of the two contemporary aboriginal artists' sculptures. This exhibit not only drew attention to Taiwan's origins as Austronesian, but it also demonstrated that Taiwan's aboriginal culture had survived and was dynamic.²⁷¹ In reference to this display, the TFAM's Acting Director, Liu Bao-guey asserted that it 'overturned the commonly held notion that Taiwanese art history began during the Japanese period' which, she says, 'expands the room for identification with an autonomous Taiwanese art'.²⁷²

This section provided an historical context for the remainder of the exhibition which explored contemporary identity issues. With six themes and more than two hundred works in the exhibition, it is impossible to discuss each individually. Therefore I will focus on works by two of the artist case studies, Mei Dean-E and Yang Mao-lin. These artists' works featured under the theme,

²⁷⁰ Yishujia, 建立一塊討論的基石—專訪蕭瓊瑞談台北市立美術館「系譜與檔案」的製作 ('Creating a Foundation for Discussion - An Interview with Hsiao Chong-ray about TFAM's production of "Genealogy and Archives"'), vol. 43, issue 3, Sept. 1996, pp.338-343 (in Chinese). Hsiao worked with other art scholars including Hsieh Li-fa, Ni Tsai-chin, Wang Hsiou-hsiung, Lee Ming-ming, Su Cheng-ming, Lee Chun-hsien, and Yang Chih-fu on this timetable. A visiting Australian academic was more sceptical remarking that 'this timeline claims a history for Taiwan [and can] be viewed as a highly motivated construction of a coherent historical narrative'. Sue Rowley, 'Experiencing Taipei', *Art Asia Pacific*, issue 15, 1997, p.38.

²⁷¹ Hsiao distinguishes between this exhibition's timeline which focused on Taiwan's history with one he had seen at the National Palace Museum (as part of the exhibition *Five thousand years of Chinese Culture*) which emphasised that Chinese civilization began in the Paleolithic "Central Plain" period. Yishujia, 'Creating a Foundation', Sept. 1996, p.339 (in Chinese).

²⁷² Liu Bao-guey, in *Quest for Identity*, 1996, p.6.

Identity and Memories,²⁷³ and a full description, together with their conceptual underpinnings, is given in the respective case study chapters. In terms of its display and reception, *Ai Dun Di Ti* (哀敦砥梯) (1996)²⁷⁴ by Mei Dean-E, was essentially a mixed media installation that was intended to resemble an official Chinese reception area, and comprised a large assemblage of objects and images which had political significance (fig. 1.7). It encompassed photographic portraits of the former leaders of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC), Deng Xiaoping (1978-1992) and Lee Teng-hui. These portraits were displayed together and were half-masked by their respective national flags which the artist had subversively reversed.

In reference to its display in the 1996 Taipei Biennale, the scholar Dai Li-qing (戴麗卿) observes the work reflected a 'strong critical spirit',²⁷⁵ parodying Taiwan-China separatism, which this exhibition was in effect seeking to promote. Dai, along with the journalist Maggie Pai, remark that, despite the significant media attention given to Taiwan-China relations at this time, 'visitors were startled by the portraits [...] finding it almost inconceivable that they were hanging side by side in a government museum.'²⁷⁶ During this period of heightened Taiwan nationalism and separatism, the juxtaposition of these leaders' portraits, and the reversal of their respective national flags, was certainly a provocative gesture, suggesting Taiwan and China's national identity and future may be inextricably tied. When asked about the audiences' reaction to his work, Mei explained to me that it was probably the first time visitors had seen the portraits of Taiwan and China's leaders, Lee Teng-hui and

²⁷³ This section featured a total of twenty-one artists' works, which represented the smallest number of works under any one of the other four themes incorporated under the overarching title of *Experiencing Taipei*.

²⁷⁴ See Chapter Three pp. 168-171.

²⁷⁵ Dai Li-qing, 如果平民藝術與官方政治同聚一堂——讀梅丁衍的〈哀敦砥梯〉思維 ('If Civilian Art and Official Politics Get Together – the "Identity" Thinking of Mei Dean-E'), 現代美術 (*Modern Art*), no. 67, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, pp.16, 12 (in Chinese). Dai Li-qing is a professor in the Department of Art at National Changhua University of Education, in Central Taiwan.

²⁷⁶ Maggie Pai, 'A Singular Question', *Asia-Pacific Sculpture News*, Summer 1996, p.45.

Deng Xiaoping, hung together, especially in an art museum. He pointed out that:

Chen Shui-bian had just become the Mayor and the political situation was open. [However,] I still felt a bit nervous putting those two portraits together [...] the DPP was not so happy to see Lee in the exhibition, especially next to China.²⁷⁷

In contrast to Mei's satirical play on identity, Yang Mao-lin's two paintings were more earnest in their exploration of this national identity discourse. Selected from his *Made in Taiwan* (1989-2001) series,²⁷⁸ works in this exhibition included *Taoyuan Memorandum – In Memory of the Battle of Chu* (1995) and *Zeelandia Memorandum L9301* (1993), which visually chronicle and critique the history of Dutch and Chinese settlement in Taiwan. In this exhibition context, Yang's images formed part of a grand narrative of Taiwan's history and raise national consciousness and memorialise the nation's past – a past distinctive and separate from China's. Although the curator of the theme *Identity and Memories*, Tsai Hung-ming (蔡宏明), did not directly engage in this political discourse, his discussion of collective memory and the role of the artist in national identity formation invoked the spirit of Taiwan consciousness. Tsai states, '...since the lifting of martial law [...] and the subsequent process of political reform [...] many historical truths that were intentionally forgotten [...] have re-surfaced, and lost memories [are being] patched together piece by piece',²⁷⁹

Tsai's reference to 'historical truths' re-surfacing alludes to the "re-discovery" of Taiwan's local histories and cultural identity, including the 2/28 incident when the KMT Army murdered thousands of Taiwanese on 28 February 1947. As discussed in the Introduction,²⁸⁰ the 2/28 incident has become a symbol of

²⁷⁷ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei. Also see Mei Dean-E, 關於政治生態圖析 ('An Illustration about the Political Environment'), EsLite Gallery, Taipei, 1992, p.3 (in Chinese).

²⁷⁸ See Chapter Four.

²⁷⁹ Tsai Hung-ming, 'Patchwork Memories – Mending the Pieces', in *Quest for Identity*, TFAM, 1996, p.18.

²⁸⁰ See Introduction p.15.

Chinese oppression and a source of ethnic tension between the *benshengren* and *waishengren* in Taiwan.²⁸¹ On the anniversary of the incident on 28 February 1995, President Lee officially apologised to victims and their families who received government compensation. A 2/28 Peace Memorial was also established in the 2/28 Peace Park, and a museum was built nearby to commemorate the event.²⁸² With funding provided by the DPP-led city government, the TFAM launched a series of annual exhibitions, beginning in 1997 and ending in 1999 which, according to the TFAM director, 'set out to reveal the true consequence of this tragedy on Taiwanese artists'.²⁸³ These 2/28 commemorative exhibitions comprised archival records and artworks by Taiwan's senior artists, including Chen Cheng-po (陳澄波) who was killed in the event and was widely celebrated during the 1990s;²⁸⁴ and by contemporary artists, including Mei Dean-E, Yang Mao-lin, and Wu Mali, who responded critically to this event.²⁸⁵ These 2/28 exhibitions reinforced the

²⁸¹ The 2/28 incident has become an important part of Taiwan's nationalist narrative. It has been widely documented and there are different versions of the incident. Most reports concur that it was sparked when a woman selling illegal cigarettes was struck by a patrol member of the Tobacco Monopoly Bureau which was largely government-controlled which caused a riot. Estimates regarding the number of people who died in this incident vary significantly from 4,000 to 30,000 but most were Taiwanese. For a report of the numbers involved and affected by this incident see, Lai Tse-han, Ramon H. Myers and Wei Wou, *A Tragic Beginning: The Taiwan Uprising of February 28, 1947*, Stanford University Press, 1991, pp.155-164. For a detailed account see: Robert Edmondson, 'The February 28 Incident and National Identity', in *Memories of the Future*, 2002, pp.25-46; Steven Phillips, 'Between Assimilation and Independence: Taiwanese Political Aspirations Under Nationalist Chinese Rule, 1945-1948', in *Taiwan: A New History*, Murray A. Rubenstein (ed.), M.E Sharpe, New York, 1999, pp.275-339.

²⁸² In an effort to appease the Taiwanese and calm the rising tide of ethnic nationalism, President Lee instigated a full inquiry into the incident which began in the late 1980s. The relatives of the victims who had been murdered were compensated and on 28 February 1995, the President officially and publicly apologised to the families. A bronze memorial, by local sculptor, Chang Tse-lung, was erected in New Park, opposite the Presidential buildings.

²⁸³ Chang Chen-yu, *Remembrance and Reflection: 2/28 Commemorative Exhibition*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 1996, p.1.

²⁸⁴ There have been numerous exhibitions, publications and audio-visual materials produced on and about Chen Cheng-po (陳澄波). These include *A Retrospective exhibition on Chen Cheng-po* (TFAM, 1992); Chen Chong-guang, 回首竟百年—「嘉義人陳澄波百年祭」紀念展有感 (*Reflection on the Exhibition in Memory of Chen Cheng-po's Hundredth Birthday*), 雄獅美術 (*Lion Art*), no. 276, 1994, pp. 41-42 (in Chinese); and 'Selected Works of Chen Cheng-po - Centennial Edition' (vols. 1 & 2) (vcd produced by the TFAM).

²⁸⁵ See Chapters Three, Four and Five.

DPP's pro-independence agenda, to forge a sense of collective memory and identity based on Taiwan's history of Chinese political and cultural oppression.

Driven by this need to define Taiwan's 'unique' identity the TFAM Director, Chang Chen-yu, emphasised the importance of creating a 'new aesthetic discourse' based on the concept of *subjectivity* and he penned a series of articles on this concept.²⁸⁶ In this context, it is important to first briefly examine the term 'subjectivity' (主體性) which, in Chinese, has multiple connotations and interpretations, and is used in a range of different disciplines from art and literature to the social sciences. As the respected academic Chang Mau-kuei acknowledges, it is a term that is difficult to translate into English but can mean "desirable", "unspoiled", "autonomous", or "authentic".²⁸⁷ In the context of Taiwan's identity discourse, scholars generally concur that subjectivity relates to notions of identity and self-determination and can be applied on individual, national and/or cultural levels.²⁸⁸ In a visual art context the writer, Jian Zi-jie (簡子傑), defines subjectivity in relation to an individual's sense of self-awareness and artistic freedom;²⁸⁹ whereas the academic Liao

²⁸⁶ Chang Chen-yu, 建構台灣文化藝術的主體性 ('Constructing the Subjectivity of Taiwan Art and Culture'), 現代美術 (*Modern Art*), no. 64, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Feb. 1996, pp. 4-5 (in Chinese).

²⁸⁷ Maukuei Chang (Chang Mau-kuei), 'The Movement to Indigenize the Social Sciences', in *Cultural, Ethnic, and Political Nationalism*, 2005, p.258.

²⁸⁸ For a selection of writings (mostly in Chinese) on the meaning and significance of subjectivity in Taiwan (other than those mentioned) including in fields other than art see: Yih-jye Hwang (Hwang Yih-jye), 'Historical and Political Knowledge in the Discursive Constitution of Taiwanese National Identity', *Perspectives*, vol.7, no.3, Sept. 2006, pp.110-131. http://www.oycf.org/Perspectives2/34_09302006/1_Hwang_TaiwaneseNationalIdentity.pdf (accessed 10/9/2011); Huang Li-ching, 論台灣文化與主體性問題 ('Taiwan Culture and the Issue of Subjectivity'), 淡江史學 (*Tamkang History Review*), no.15, July 2004, pp.309-329 (in Chinese); Lu Kuang, 在脫節的時間中——台灣文化的主體性問題 ('In the Time of Disconnection - the Subjectivity Issue of Taiwan Culture'), 現代美術 (*Modern Art*), issue 64, Feb. 1996, pp.17-19 (in Chinese); Chang Guo-qing, 追尋 (台灣意識) 的定位: 透視 (論台灣的本土化運動) 之迷思 ('Searching for the Position of Taiwan Consciousness: Perspectives on the Myths of Taiwan's Localisation Movement'), 中外文學 (*Zhongwai Literary Monthly*), issue 274, Mar. 1995, pp.127-132 (in Chinese).

²⁸⁹ Jian Zi-jie, 何為 (台灣藝術主體性)? 1996台北雙年展 (台灣藝術主體性) 的批評論述 ('What is the "Subjectivity of Taiwan Art"? A Critique and Discourse on the "Subjectivity of Taiwan Art in the Taipei Biennial"'), 台灣美術 (*Taiwan Art*), no. 72, 2008, pp.91-93 (in Chinese).

Hsin-tien (廖新田) analyses it in relation to cultural politics and Taiwan's struggle for independence.²⁹⁰ Liao emphasises that analysis of subjectivity should not be about 'choosing sides', but he also observes that 'those who are often most concerned about this topic [subjectivity] are often those who sense the loss or will lose their subjectivity'; he adds, 'we are acknowledging the presence of such a threat'.²⁹¹ During the 1990s subjectivity broadly engaged with issues relating to colonisation, resistance and emancipation (from the Japanese and KMT regimes and also Western domination), and it was driven by democratisation, a growing opposition to the China's Communist government and its military threat, and to some extent by globalisation.

In visual art discourse subjectivity also revolved around the concept of 'the land', defined by one's relationship to it, and by the need to discover and repossess it (i.e. Taiwan, its people and culture), ideas that were central to postcolonial discourse. As Edward Said argues, the concept of the 'land' and the need to 'reclaim, rename and reinhabit' it is of chief importance to the processes of decolonisation, and to the 'recovery of geographical territory'.²⁹² During this decade, the land was a common motif explored by artists, including Yang Mao-lin and Yao Jui-chung, and the ways they differently interpreted this concept is examined in their respective chapters. In essays written by Chang Chen-yu and by the contributors to the catalogue for *Quest for Identity*, the land was interpreted mainly in relation to Taiwan's history and identity. Chang, for example, argued that Taiwan's history of foreign colonisation, modernisation and Western cultural imperialism had clouded artists' self-awareness and their ability to connect with the 'real land' (現實土壤) of Taiwan.²⁹³ In one of the more cogent and thought provoking essays in the exhibition's catalogue,

²⁹⁰ Liao Hsin-tien, 'Imaginations and Choices in the Subjectivity of Taiwanese Art', *Collision between Regions and Styles of Times - Collected Papers from the Academic Conference on Subjectivity of Taiwanese Art*, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei, 2007, p.31.

²⁹¹ Liao Hsin-tien, in *Collision between Regions and Styles of Times*, 2007, p.23.

²⁹² Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage, New York, 1994, pp.278, 252.

²⁹³ Chang Chen-yu, 'The Death of Modernism', *Modern Art*, 1996, pp. 52-53 (in Chinese).

art writer and academic, Lee Chun-hsien (李俊賢) draws on the metaphor of the 'land' to describe how foreign cultural influences, which he metaphorically describes as cuttings, have been grafted onto Taiwan's local culture and become rooted in this land. Lee argues that, through this process of cross-cultural fertilisation between Taiwan's 'natural' (or native) and 'artificial' (or introduced) elements, the 'subjectivity' of Taiwan's art will grow.²⁹⁴

In other essays the curators expatiated on such theories of subjectivity and the meaning of 'the land'; and although their definitions of this term were diverse and often vague, there was general consensus regarding a need to develop a new language that was *Taiwanese*. This recalls Michel Foucault's discussion on subjectivity where he advocates the need to 'resist' totalising narratives which, he claims, have been imposed upon individuals by the nation-state and to invent 'new forms of subjectivity'.²⁹⁵ In Taiwan's case, however, they were seeking to create a narrative that would support and legitimise rather than undermine the nation-state - a critical distinction. The art critic, Hsieh Tung-shan (謝東山) suggested the only way to achieve subjectivity was through the rejection of Chinese and 'foreign' cultural influence, urging artists to 'give up tracing Western art history', 'face the reality of our daily lives', and develop new forms of self-identification.²⁹⁶ Echoing Hsieh's comments Chang asserted artists had become 'alienated' (異化)²⁹⁷ from their own culture, and culturally reliant on the West, which, he claimed, is reflected by the lack of artistic

²⁹⁴ Lee Chun-hsien, 'Constructing an Identity for Taiwan Art', in *Quest for Identity*, 1996, pp.39-43; also see his article 建構台灣藝術的主體性 ('Constructing the Subjectivity of Taiwan Art'), 藝術家 (Artist), no. 254, July 1996, pp. 243-246 (in Chinese).

²⁹⁵ Michel Foucault, 'Afterword: The Subject and Power', in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (eds.), University of Chicago Press, 1983, p.216.

²⁹⁶ Hsieh Tung-shan, 'Sexuality and Power', in *Quest for Identity*, 1996, pp.83-86. Other articles by Hsieh that also reflect on this topic include: 從威尼斯雙年展談台灣藝術的未來 ('Discussion on the Future of Taiwan Art in the Venice Biennale'), 雄獅美術 (Lion Art), no. 293, July 1995 (in Chinese); 台灣藝術的本土化與主體性 ('Localism and Subjectivity in Taiwan Art'), 藝術家 (Artist), no. 254, July 1996, pp.247-250 (in Chinese).

²⁹⁷ Chang Chen-yu, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei. Chang Chen-yu, 'To Break the Spell of the Myths', *Modern Art*, 1996, p.50 (in Chinese); Chang Chen-yu, 'Constructing the Subjectivity', *Modern Art*, 1996, pp.4-5 (in Chinese).

originality in Taiwan, and by artists' 'arts for art's sake' mentalities.²⁹⁸ Contrary to Hsieh's emphasis on the importance of building a 'new' culture, Chang urges artists to determine with which existing culture they seek to identify, that is: Taiwan's 'original' (*bentu*) culture; the 'advanced culture of the colonist' meaning Japanese, Chinese and Western; or 'the new, mixed culture' of globalization.²⁹⁹ In an interview I conducted with Chang in 1995, when he was the TFAM's director, he emphasised that:

Art should not be separate from the real world. I think artists in Taiwan need to be aware of this and recognise the truth so that culture can grow with society.³⁰⁰

Although Chang's comments were polemic, controversial and not always embraced in the art field, even the harshest critics acknowledge Chang's contribution to the development of this discourse on identity consciousness in art.³⁰¹ The art critic, Sun Li-quan (孫立銓) claims these issues had not previously been explored in any depth, especially in the TFAM's exhibitions, which he derisively describes as 'historical description'.³⁰² He does, however, question the political motives behind this exhibition, suggesting it may have been a strategy to promote the DPP's pro-independence agenda. Certainly, during Chang's tenure the TFAM's programmes became increasingly Taiwan-centred as evidenced by the dramatic decline in the number of international exhibitions - less than a quarter of the number presented during his predecessor's tenure.³⁰³ There was also a discernible increase in the number of exhibitions incorporating the word 'Taiwan' in the title; and conversely, the word 'China' did not appear in any exhibition titles presented at the TFAM

²⁹⁸ Chang Chen-yu, 'The Death of Modernism', *Modern Art*, 1996, pp.52-3 (in Chinese).

²⁹⁹ Chang Chen-yu, 'The Death of Modernism', *Modern Art*, 1996, pp.52-3 (in Chinese).

³⁰⁰ Chang Chen-yu, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

³⁰¹ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei; Wu Ting-yu, 'Is It Art? Or is it Garbage? Talking about TFAM and Taiwan Subjectivity', 典藏藝術 (*Art & Collection*), issue 48, Sept. 1996, pp.174-177 (in Chinese). Also, Sun Li-quan, 'The Performance and Examination of the Power of the Exhibition: Some Perspectives on TFAM's Quest for Identity', 炎黃藝術 (*Dragon Art*), no. 80, Sept. 1996, pp.56-57 (in Chinese); Jian Zi-jie, 'What is the "Subjectivity"', in *Taiwan Art*, 1996, pp.91-93 (in Chinese).

³⁰² Sun Li-quan, 'The Performance', *Dragon Art*, 1996, pp.56-57 (in Chinese).

³⁰³ Lai Ying-ying, *A Reflexive Study of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum*, PhD, 2008, (in Chinese), p.10.

during Chang's term in office.³⁰⁴ As the Australian-based academic, Mark Harrison points out, the issue of naming is central to Taiwan's identity discourse and to redefining the nation.³⁰⁵ The nomenclature conferred on this island (i.e. as Taiwan, Formosa, ROC, Taipei-China or Chinese-Taipei) is, I argue, essentially political and it has changed over time, and this is manifest in the museological representation of art.

On 4 June 1996, after only nine months in office, and only one month prior to the opening of *Quest for Identity*, Chang was forced to resign after a series of public protests and allegations of embezzlement³⁰⁶ with some claiming he was 'too political' and lacked museum management experience. After his departure, *Quest for Identity* was managed by the then Chief Curator and Head of the TFAM's Exhibition Department, Lee Yu-lin (李玉玲). Lee was also a proud supporter of the DPP and, as one of the TFAM's most respected and experienced curators, she had considerable influence in the art field. In an article published in the *New York Times* in 1995, Lee reportedly stated to a journalist '...I'm DPP [...] I'll help you if you'll put forward the case for an independent Taiwan in your article.'³⁰⁷ Although Lee publicly denies having said this, her support for the DPP was well-known within the local art community during the 1990s. Lee no longer works at the TFAM, and although she may not be quite as strident in her political views, during a conversation in 2009 she continued to assert that, while Taiwan continues to strive for identity

³⁰⁴ Lai Ying-ying, *A Reflexive Study of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum*, PhD, 2008, (in Chinese). Although the exhibition title is not necessarily an accurate and complete representation of the content of an exhibition the inclusion of a country's name does give a clear indication of the cultural genesis and focus of an exhibition.

³⁰⁵ Harrison, *Legitimacy, Meaning and Knowledge*, 2006, pp.4-6; and on naming and power see pp. 63-70. In addition, for a political analysis of naming and its significance see Chang Hui-ching and Richard G. Holt, 'Naming China: An Analysis of Taiwan's National Day Speeches', *Journal of Language and Politics*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2011. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1075/jlp.10.3.05cha> (accessed 5/6/2011).

³⁰⁶ Chang was also accused of misappropriating museum funds. *The China Post*, Sept. 7, 1995, p.4; Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei. Also see Ku Wen-huie, *Challenges faced by cultural administration*, MA thesis, 2007 (in Chinese).

³⁰⁷ Andrew Solomon, 'On Each Palette a Choice of Political Colors', *The New York Times*, Aug. 4, 1996.

and international recognition, art and politics in Taiwan will inevitably remain closely interconnected.³⁰⁸

Taiwan's representation at the 1995 and 1997 Venice biennales

Several months after Chang Chen-yu's resignation, Lin Mun-lee (林曼麗) (Oct. 1996-July 2000),³⁰⁹ who was an academic, was appointed to the position of director by the DPP city government. While Lin's views on Taiwan identity were less extremist or oppositional than Chang's, her support for the DPP was equally strong. This was clear in the TFAM's exhibition, *Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Faces* (台灣台灣: 面目全非) (fig. 1.8), that opened in Venice in 1997 during her tenure, and a year after *Quest for Identity*. As the organiser of Taiwan's representation at the Venice Biennale, this was the second time the TFAM had officially participated - the first was in 1995, and, as mentioned, it generated significant controversy in Taiwan because of the perceived top heavy role of the three European jurors.³¹⁰ Significantly, in 1997, the jury panel was from Taiwan, with the exception of one Japanese curator, Fumio Nanjo, who was subsequently appointed guest curator of the TFAM's first international Taipei Biennial, *Site of Desire* (慾望場域) in 1998.³¹¹ It is difficult to ascertain whether this curatorial shift was a response to the alleged Western-centricism of Taiwan's representation in 1995; or if it was an outcome of the paradigmatic shift engendered by *Quest for Identity* a year earlier. It is likely all these factors contributed towards this local turn in which Taiwan's identity was writ large. Before examining this exhibition, however, a brief introduction to the Venice Biennale and to Taiwan's role within it is relevant.

The Venice Biennale is the oldest and one of the most important international biennales of art in the world; and it is popularly described as the 'United

³⁰⁸ Lee Yu-lin, Interview with the Author, 2009, Taipei.

³⁰⁹ Lin was previously an Associate Professor of the National Taipei Teachers College.

³¹⁰ In 1993, Taiwan performance artist Lee Ming-sheng (see Chapter Five) was involved as an independent artist in the Venice Biennale but he was not represented by the TFAM.

³¹¹ See Chapter Two pp.118-120.

Nations of Art' given that artists are selected and represented according to their country; and recognised nations are presented by pavilions in the main exhibition grounds of the Giardini.³¹² Notwithstanding issues concerning Taiwan's 'national' status in this exhibition, the political and cultural significance of Taiwan's participation in this major international art event is widely acknowledged, and it is the most important exhibition on the TFAM's calendar, alongside the Taipei Biennial.³¹³ In her paper, 'Mapping Taiwan', Lai Ying-ying (賴瑛瑛) highlights the 'positive role' played by the Venice Biennale (and the Taipei Biennial) in 'marketing' Taiwan to the international community. Lai discusses how exhibitions such as the Venice Biennale provide a 'crucial door' through which artists from Taiwan can 'enter the international art world'.³¹⁴ She also argues that they help to 'internationalise' and enrich Taiwan's art field.³¹⁵ The writer, Lu Pei-i (呂佩怡) is, however, more critical of the considerable efforts the TFAM and the government have made to ensure Taiwan's involvement in the Venice Biennale, and he questions their political motives. He asserts that, during the 1990s, the Taiwan government's need to differentiate Taiwan art from Chinese art was the central rationale underpinning Taiwan's representation in Venice.³¹⁶ Certainly, since 1999 when Chinese art rose to prominence at the Venice Biennale, and when Taiwan

³¹² The Giardini is a park in Venice where thirty permanent national pavilions are situated. Other countries (which are not recognised, can ill-afford the space in the Giardini or were latecomers to the biennale) exhibit their artists' works in buildings outside the Giardini. This includes Taiwan, as well as China, Singapore, New Zealand and others.

³¹³ Kao Chien-hui cited in Lai Ying-ying, 'Mapping Taiwan: Strategies of Taiwan's International Art Biennials', conference paper, 2008 International Symposium, Museum of Art, Seoul, p.11; Schöber, in *Re-Writing Culture in Taiwan*, 2009, pp.169-171.

³¹⁴ Lai, 'Mapping Taiwan', p.6.

³¹⁵ Lai, 'Mapping Taiwan', p.6

³¹⁶ Lu Pei-i, 誰在想像建構「台灣特性」? 威尼斯雙年展台灣館展覽策略探討 ('Who Imagines to Build Taiwanese Characteristics? - A Study on the Curatorial Strategy for the Taiwan Pavilion in the Venice Biennale'), 現代美術學報 (*Journal of Taipei Fine Arts Museum*), no. 4, 2001, p.126 (in Chinese).

lost its national status in the exhibition, Taiwan's representation at Venice has acquired additional political significance.³¹⁷

The aforementioned issue of naming 'Taiwan' is particularly important in these international exhibitions: for after all, 'to title is to entitle'.³¹⁸ Taiwan's inaugural exhibition in Venice in 1995 was titled *Art Taiwan*; and in 1997, the exhibition organisers were bolder, adopting the title *Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Faces* wherein the word 'Taiwan' appears upfront and twice (fig. 1.9). Significantly, for the first time in 1997, Taiwan was granted its own 'national' pavilion which was a former prison located outside the main exhibition grounds. The title was clearly a means of drawing attention to its newly acquired 'national' status. Arguably though the title was too audacious, because after this exhibition Taiwan was stripped of its 'national' status and demoted to an institutional participant after the Chinese government exerted diplomatic pressure on the exhibition organisers, claiming the word 'Taiwan' challenged China's 'one China' policy.

Apart from the Olympic Games, there are numerous other cases in which the issue of the naming of Taiwan in international events and exhibitions has been contested by China.³¹⁹ In 2002, for example, the Sao Paulo Biennale exhibition organisers instructed Taiwan representatives to remove the word 'Taiwan' from the Taiwan artist's exhibition space after Chinese government officials objected to the naming of 'Taiwan'. The space was subsequently re-named the

³¹⁷ For further discussion on the rising popularity of Chinese art at the Venice Biennale see Chapter Two p.133. For more information on reactions to Taiwan's loss of national status in the Venice Biennale see Chapters Two pp.133-134 and Seven, p.381.

³¹⁸ Bruce Ferguson, Reesa Greenberg and Sandy Nairn, 'Mapping International Exhibitions', *Curating: The Contemporary Art Museum and Beyond*, Art & Design, no. 52, London, 1997, p.30.

³¹⁹ In the 1996 Asia-Pacific Triennial (APT) in Brisbane entitled *Beyond the Future* Taiwan was represented for the first time. However, the participating artists were acknowledged by the gallery organisers as coming from 'Taipei' instead of 'Taiwan' because there were concerns the Chinese government may object. This, however, caused some confusion when a participating artist from the southern city of Kaohsiung, Lee Ming-tse was referred to as coming from two cities: 'Kaohsiung, Taipei'. Notably, on a map of Asia in the catalogue, the word 'Taiwan' was also excluded and, in the conference, questions were raised about the politics and representation of Taiwan art.

'Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei'. A group of participating international artists, objecting to China's political intervention in this art event, strategically re-assembled and re-instated the word 'Taiwan' using the adhesive letters from their own countries' wall labels.³²⁰

As part of the 'branding' of Taiwan, it is vitally important for the government to demonstrate and, moreover, distinguish its national identity and culture from those of other participating countries and, most importantly, from China. Exhibitions in Venice have implicitly or explicitly promoted Taiwan's democratic, technologically advanced, and culturally tolerant attitudes towards themes which some countries might deem controversial. This was exemplified by Yao Jui-chung's photographic series *Territory Takeover* (1994), which portrays the artist standing naked and urinating on six of Taiwan's historically significant sites;³²¹ and works by Hou Chun-ming (侯俊明) (represented in the 1995 exhibition) that were imbued with sexual references.³²² In this international forum, these artists' works arguably provided visual evidence of the democratic freedoms afforded to artists in Taiwan, and it was another factor used to differentiate Taiwan from China.

In 1995, the jury (nominated by the TFAM) selected works that evoked a strong international style and Asian flavour. According to the TFAM, the exhibition conveyed an 'exotic feel that tends to strike Europeans as 'very Asian'.³²³ This exhibition represented five artists spanning different

³²⁰ Ironically, in this exhibition the artist's work was shown under the theme 'National Representations'. This incident attracted international media coverage, and it highlights the political implications of the terms *representation* and *Taiwan* in an international context. For details on this incident at Sao Paulo see Violet Chang, 'Artists Spell Victory for Taiwan Protest', *Taiwan Today*, 4 May 2002. <http://www.taiwantoday.tw/ct.asp?xItem=19295&CtNode=451> (accessed 19/2/2011).

³²¹ See Chapter Six pp.301-306.

³²² For a detailed discussion of these works see Yang Wen-I, 'Rising from the Sea-Contemporary Taiwanese Art', in *Art Taiwan: La Biennale Di Venezia*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 1995, pp.21-22.

³²³ Chen Shu-ling and Hu Hui-ju, in 'Reflections on the Taiwan Pavilion', in *Taiwan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale*, 2010, pp.36-37.

generations, including Wu Mali, whose installation was perceived by the judges to engage 'in a dialogue between East and West'.³²⁴ Perhaps because it was Taiwan's inaugural appearance at Venice, internationalism was emphasised over and above national identity politics.³²⁵ In the catalogue's preface, the TFAM's Deputy Director states that the most 'meaningful' aspects of this exhibition are the 'biennale's forward looking cultural tradition of transcending politics with art', being able to demonstrate Taiwan has 'advanced out of self-isolation' and its ability to develop a 'confident, meaningful' dialogue with the international art community.³²⁶ In contrast, the subsequent 1997 exhibition, *Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Faces* at Venice had a clear political agenda: to promote Taiwan's cultural distinctiveness, and its separateness from China.³²⁷ In the catalogue's preface Lin Mun-lee asserts that *Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Faces* seeks to reflect the 'uniqueness of things Taiwanese', and she raises the question 'what exactly defines the essence of Taiwanese culture?'³²⁸

In her article on the politics of cultural representation, and more specifically the 'brokering' role played by curators in the 'cultural identities market', Mari Carmen Ramirez reflects on the ways cultural difference is exoticised in international exhibitions where the nation is foregrounded. By exploring how selected works are seen to have marketing potential in terms of defining a national culture, Ramirez raises the critical question 'who articulates identity?'³²⁹ In this Venice context, it is clear that the most influential agents in the visual representation of Taiwan's identity were not artists themselves but

³²⁴ See Chapter Five for more information on Wu's work, *The Library* (pp.266-268). Chen Shu-ling and Hu Hui-ju, in 'Reflections on the Taiwan Pavilion, 1995-2007', in *Taiwan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale: A Retrospective 1995-2007*, TFAM p.36.

³²⁵ Despite the fact the overall theme of the Venice Biennale in 1995 was *Identity and Alterity*.

³²⁶ Tsai Ching-fen, 'Preface', in *ArtTaiwan*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 1995, p.4.

³²⁷ The overall theme of the 1997 Venice Biennale was *Future, Present, Past*.

³²⁸ Lin Mun-lee, 'Director's Preface', in *Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Faces*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 1997, p.2.

³²⁹ Mari Carmen Ramirez, 'Brokering Identities: Art Curators and the Politics of Cultural Representation', *Thinking About Exhibitions*, Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (eds.), Routledge, London, 1996, p.23.

the politicians, museum directors (and their staff) and the panel of judges who set out to construct specific narratives to define Taiwan art, which then became a valuable tool in the national re-branding exercise.

Although *Quest for Identity* and *Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Faces* targeted very different audiences, and differed significantly in terms of their scale and scope, they shared the same ideological and curatorial agenda, and it is thus instructive to compare these exhibitions. Both *Quest for Identity* and *Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Faces* sought to visually express Taiwan's 'unique' cultural identity, and both explicitly or implicitly promoted self-determination. The critical point of difference was how Taiwan's identity was visually interpreted and represented, which, I argue, was principally determined by the exhibition's location and audience. For example, *Quest for Identity* exhibition narratives focused on Taiwan's history and its aboriginal ancestral and cultural connections, and notions of subjectivity, which were framed in opposition to Chinese and Western hegemonic influence. In Venice, however, Taiwan's identity was generally defined in multicultural and cosmopolitan terms, simultaneously promoting Taiwan's culturally pluralistic culture, and its position in the world. It is noteworthy that, to date, no aboriginal artists from Taiwan have been represented in the Venice Biennale; it is unclear if this is because these artists are not regarded as sufficiently contemporary, international, or visually representative of Taiwan.

In addition, while *Quest for Identity* featured predominantly painting, *Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Faces* presented a diverse range of works in digital and mixed media. Of the five artists whose works featured in this exhibition, only one was a painter,³³⁰ while the remaining artists worked in mixed media, including photography, digital art and installation.³³¹ Conceptually, *Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Faces* sought to engage in contemporary cultural discourse and in

³³⁰ This painter was Lee Ming-tse (李明則).

³³¹ These included Yao Jui-chung, Wu Tien-chang, Wang Jun-jieh (王俊傑), and Chen Chien-bei.

themes relating to postcolonialism and postmodernism as well as spirituality and virtual worlds. This was exemplified in the catalogue essays, which explored the effects of foreign colonisation, political authoritarianism, and highlighted the culturally heterogeneous aspects of Taiwan art.³³² Although *Quest for Identity* indirectly engaged in postcolonial themes relating to the rehabilitation and re-definition of Taiwan's culture, the concept of identity was firmly planted in 'the soil' of Taiwan, and not in other worlds.

The different ways Taiwan's identity was interpreted in these exhibitions is best exemplified in works by Wu Tien-chang (吳天章) who featured in both exhibitions (figs. 1.10 & 1.11). In *Quest for Identity* Wu's monumental and politically charged *Four Eras* series explored notions of power, repression and resistance. In these massive and widely shown portraits of the leaders of the People's Republic of China (PRC) with the Republic of China (ROC), including Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping along with Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo, Wu makes little distinction between them: they are equally grotesque and menacing as they appear to reach out of the frame towards the viewer. In Taiwan's politically charged environment, these bold political paintings spoke to a local audience, many of whom could recall memories of China and of the White Terror period.³³³ In contrast, *Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Faces* featured a selection of Wu's more whimsical, postmodern and satirical mixed media and audio-visual works collectively entitled *Dream of Past Era* (1994-1995). In these digitally assembled images of sexually aroused dandies, the artist parodies notions of power and authority and, as such, they marked a radical departure from his political history paintings in *Quest for Identity*.

In his critique of Taiwan's exhibitions at Venice during the 1990s Lu Pei-I describes how these exhibitions have been characterised by 'freak exoticism',

³³² See Lu Ching-fu, 'Tendencies Towards Local Consciousness'; and Huang Hai-ming, 'Contemporary Art of Taiwan - Virtual Connections, Criticism, Returnings', in *Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Faces*, pp.7-18; 19-26.

³³³ The 'White Terror' is discussed in the Introduction p.19.

designed to appeal to Western taste, engaging in themes relating to the body, death, self-destruction, sex and spirituality.³³⁴ In the 1997 exhibition it could be argued that some of these issues were explored in a general way by artists including Wu Tien-chang, Chen Chien-bei (陳建北) and even Yao Jui-chung, but this is a simplistic reading of conceptually complex works; moreover, it can be argued these are themes explored by artists internationally. Whether these works were politically inspired, as the Chinese curator Gao Minglu (高名潞) suggests, is another question.³³⁵ As demonstrated, in Taiwan the visual image has been employed as a vehicle to reflect and endorse prevailing political ideology and, at the height of Taiwan-China separatism, every effort was invested in the promotion of Taiwan's identity as culturally distinctive and advanced.

As this chapter has argued, during this decade politics and art were closely intertwined in a symbiotic relationship, defined by a shared recognition and appreciation of the distinctiveness of Taiwan's identity and culture. With the lifting of martial law, the rise of democratisation and Taiwanisation, discourses on identity became increasingly Taiwan-centred, and revolved around the construction of a nation. As Anderson points out, nations 'should be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness but by the style in which they are imagined'.³³⁶ In this chapter I have explored the different ways in which the 'Taiwan nation' was imagined through three important exhibitions of Taiwan art. These exhibitions called attention to Taiwan's history of foreign colonisation, its Austronesian origins, and explored notions of subjectivity and cultural distinctiveness. Collectively, these identity narratives underlined Taiwan's separateness from China, in contrast to earlier exhibitions which emphasised Taiwan's *Chinese* cultural roots. As such, these exhibitions

³³⁴ Lu Pei-I, 'Who Imagines to Build', *Journal of Taipei Fine Arts Museum*, 2001, pp. 125-147 (in Chinese).

³³⁵ Lu Pei-I, 'Who Imagines to Build', *Journal of Taipei Fine Arts Museum*, 2001, pp. 125-147 (in Chinese).

³³⁶ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 1991, p.6.

signified a critical ideological and cultural shift in the visual interpretation and representation of national identity. The effects of this paradigmatic shift are further explored in the following chapter, which focuses on the international dimensions of Taiwan's quest for national identity.



Figure 1.1 Taipei Fine Arts Museum

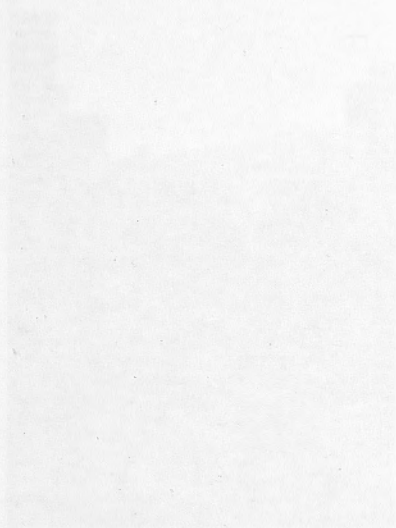


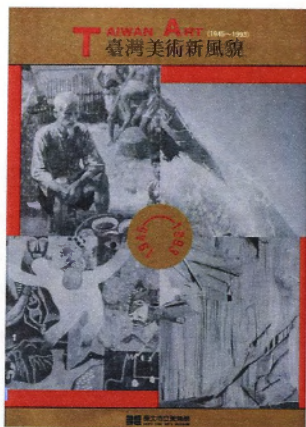
Figure 1.2 Long Foundation Art Museum, 1985 (re-named Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall)



Figure 1.1: Taipei Fine Arts Museum



Figure 1.2: Lee Tsai-chien, *Minimal Infinite*, 1985 (re-named *Homerun*), steel sculpture



Figures 1.3 & 1.4 (left to right): *Taiwan Art 1945-1993* exhibition catalogue; Chen Cheng-po, *Reminiscences of the Past*, 1945, oil on canvas (in *Taiwan Art 1945-1993*)



Figure 1.5: Wu Mali, *Daihatsu Car*, 1991, mixed media (in *Taiwan Art 1945-1993*)
(Image courtesy of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum)

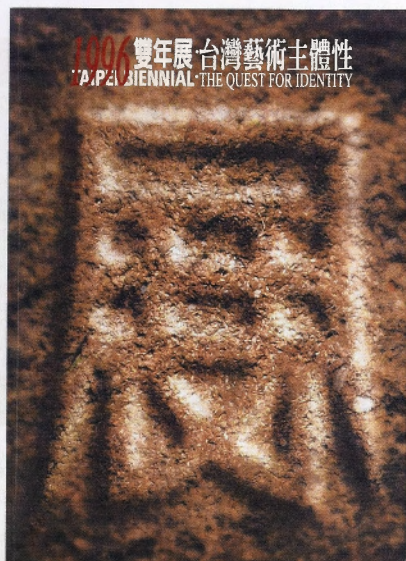
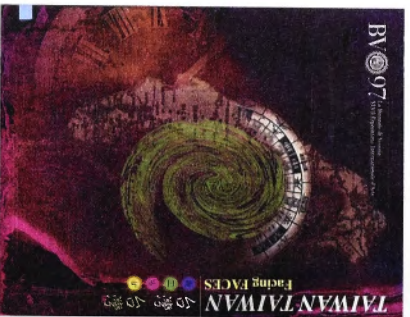


Figure 1.6: 1996 Taipei Biennial: *The Quest for Identity* exhibition catalogue



Figure 1.7: Mei Dean-E, *Ai Dun Di Ti*, 1996, mixed media installation (in *Quest for Identity*) (Image courtesy of the TFAM)



Figures 1.8 & 1.9 (left to right): *Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Faces* exhibition catalogue; Taiwan exhibition site, Venice Biennale, 1997



Figures 1.10 & 1.11 (top to bottom): Wu Tien-chang, from *Wounded Funeral I-IV* series, 1994, (*Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Faces*); *Four Era* series, 1989 (*Quest for Identity*)

CHAPTER TWO

Regional and International Cross-Currents in the Museological Representation of Art from Taiwan 1998-2000

Since Taiwan was expelled from the United Nations (UN) in 1971, the quest for international recognition has been central to its nation-building programme, and is crucial to its legitimacy as a 'nation'. Given its problematic political status in the world, successive governments in Taiwan have used its economic and cultural achievements and its democratic status to build and strengthen its diplomatic connections with other countries, and to demonstrate its cultural distinctiveness from China. While Chapter One focused on the TFAM's role in national identity formation primarily within a *domestic* political context, this chapter focuses on the critical role played by the TFAM in Taiwan's quest for *international* recognition through the museological representation of art. Focusing on the late 1990s, and on two major exhibitions, the Taipei and Venice biennials, it demonstrates how conceptions and narratives of identity progressively shifted during this transitional period from a Taiwan-centric focus to an outward-looking one, encompassing Asia, particularly Japan, and ultimately the world.

As a small island geographically located on the periphery of Mainland China, Taiwan's national survival depends on its ability to re-invent itself and adapt to changing local and global trends. By the late 1990s Taiwan faced a new set of economic challenges emanating from the effects of globalisation, the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, the rise of China and the handover of Hong Kong. Furthermore, the global rise of Asian contemporary art, the proliferation of biennials in the region, and a decline in the local art market generated their own challenges as well as new opportunities. I argue that these economic and cultural developments, coupled with a growing sense of disenchantment with the politicisation of identity debates, brought about a cultural shift in the art field. While the concept of the nation as a distinct political entity remained fixed in Taiwan's national imaginary, visual art identity narratives no longer

centred on the boundedness of the nation, or on notions of cultural distinctiveness, but rather on Taiwan's connections with Asia and the world. This was reflected visually in the museological representation of art, and exemplified in the exhibitions, *Site of Desire* and *Close to Open: Taiwanese Artists Exposed* (hereafter *Close to Open*), presented in Taipei and Venice in 1998 and 1999 respectively.

Site of Desire, the principal exhibition examined, was the TFAM's inaugural international Taipei Biennial. Although it focused on art from Northeast Asia, its scope was international, and it was initiated as a response to the 'biennialisation' and rise of Asian art in the world. It was also the first Taipei Biennial curated by a non-local, and by a Japanese curator. Although the choice of this curator was not necessarily politically-driven, in the context of the 'internationalisation' of Taiwan's identity and of the art field, and of Taiwan's close relationship with Japan, it was certainly strategic. This chapter examines the important role played by Japan in Taiwan's identity discourses and its shift towards Asia and internationalism in art. *Close to Open* also encompassed regional and international curatorial and artistic perspectives, and reflected upon Taiwan's processes of political and cultural liberalisation. In contrast to *Quest for Identity* (1996) and *Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Faces* (1997) which focused exclusively on Taiwan's identity in art, *Site of Desire* and *Close to Open* emphasised Taiwan's geocultural connections with Asia and with the world, thus signifying a subtle but critical shift in conceptions of identity in art. I argue that these exhibitions reflected the new KMT municipal government's cultural policy objectives, which prioritised internationalisation over Taiwanisation (formerly promoted by the DPP-led municipal government). During this period, internationalism progressively displaced Taiwan nationalist discourses in visual art, and opened up new opportunities, which were embraced by artists, curators, and museums, and contributed to the re-definition of Taiwan's identity.

The TFAM's role in Taiwan's quest for international recognition

'Internationalisation' (*guojihua* 國際化) is, by definition, a process of encounter and interaction between or among nation-states (as the prefix 'inter' implies). The term is used here purposely to emphasise the importance of international recognition in Taiwan and also the enduring influence of the nation-state in the museological representation of art at the TFAM. Prior to exploring this relationship, it is important to note that, in visual art discourse, the meaning of the term 'internationalisation' has changed over time. As discussed in Chapter One, during the early-mid 1980s, it was synonymous with economic and cultural modernisation and progress. However, with the rise of Taiwan nationalism from the late 1980s, internationalisation was equated with Western cultural imperialism and the loss of identity consciousness in art. By the late 1990s, it was associated with the global rise of Asia and also with the opening up of visual art discourse to regional and international trends.

Given Taiwan's problematic diplomatic status, curator Victoria Lu has argued that '[Taiwan's] cultural participation [in international exhibitions] is a vital element in the government's return to the UN's policy'.³³⁷ As Taiwan's premier contemporary public art museum, the TFAM has played an important role in Taiwan's political campaign for international recognition and national sovereignty. Since opening in 1983, the TFAM has hosted many exhibitions from abroad and, by the early 1990s, it was also presenting and touring exhibitions of Taiwan art overseas. Such exhibitions helped forge international connections and raised the profile of Taiwan in the global community.³³⁸ During the early-mid 1980s, the TFAM mainly imported international

³³⁷ Victoria Lu, 'The New Wave', in *Taiwan Art 1945-1993*, 1993, p.76.

³³⁸ These international exhibitions included: solo and group foreign exhibitions hosted by the TFAM, as well as open call competitions, country and medium specific exhibitions. According to Lai Ying-ying's statistics there were a total of sixty-five exhibitions presented during the period 1983-1990. However, the TFAM data shows there were a total of fifty-six exhibitions presented during this period. See Lai Ying-ying, *A Reflexive Study on the TFAM's Exhibitions*, PhD, 2008, p.398 (in Chinese); *Taipei Fine Arts Museum: Exhibition Review - 25 Years*, TFAM, Taipei, 2008, pp.305-314.

exhibitions. These were often quasi-official cultural initiatives and exchanges³³⁹ designed to strengthen and promote 'international friendly relations'³⁴⁰ between Taiwan (or, the 'ROC'/'China' as the KMT government then insisted) and Taiwan's allies and benefactors, including most notably Japan and America.³⁴¹ On a local level, these international exhibitions were viewed by the KMT as a *civilizing* force, designed to 'educate the general public by introducing the essential art movements of the world'.³⁴² In addition to hosting incoming international art exhibitions of modern art, the TFAM presented exhibitions that brought together local and overseas artists' works. Generally conservative in content and style, these were often medium-specific, focusing on printmaking and 'Chinese' art, including calligraphy and ink painting.³⁴³

By the 1990s, under the leadership of President Lee Teng-hui and the Taipei Mayor, Chen Shui-bian (1994-1998), this predilection for the importation and presentation of Western and traditional Chinese art was overturned. As a

³³⁹ These were often organised by foreign diplomatic agencies based in Taiwan, or through sister-city relations. For example, in 1989 the TFAM presented *Bauhaus 1919-1933* that was co-organised by the German Cultural Centre in Taipei and the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations in Stuttgart. In 1987, the TFAM presented *Contemporary Art from Southern California* which was co-sponsored by sister-cities of Taipei and Los Angeles.

³⁴⁰ Su Rui-ping (Martha Su), 'Preface', in *Taipei Fine Arts Museum*, TFAM, Taipei, 1985, p.3.

³⁴¹ Exhibitions from Japan and America presented by the TFAM from 1983 until 1987 included: (from Japan) *Modern Japanese Lacquer Art Exhibition* (1983), *The Chinese and Japanese Art Exhibition* (1984), *The Chinese Japan Exchange Exhibition* (1985); *Contemporary Japanese Textile Art* (1986); and *Contemporary Japanese Art* (1986). (From America): *New American Paper works* (1983); *American Watercolour* (1985), *Jazz Photos* (1986); and *Contemporary Art from Southern California* (1987).

³⁴² Su states '[international exhibitions are designed] to educate the general public by introducing essential art movements of the world' and 'elevate domestic artistic development'. Su, 'Preface' in *A Retrospective Exhibition of Contemporary Chinese Art*, TFAM, Taipei, 1986, (n.p.); Su, in *Taipei Fine Arts Museum*, 1985, p.3.

³⁴³ These included the *International Print Exhibition* (1983) (later called the *International Biennial Print Exhibition*); *The Chinese, Japanese, Korean Watercolour Exhibition* (1984), the 1983 Republic of China International Exhibition (1983), *The Republic of China International Calligraphy Exhibition* (1984) and the *International Ceramics Exhibition* (1985) and *The International Ink Painting Exhibition* (1985). During the 1970s, prior to the establishment of the TFAM, there were also some official exhibitions of ink painting or calligraphy organised, such as *Modern Chinese Ink Painting exhibition* which travelled to Europe, and a *National Calligraphy Exhibition* which was held at the National Museum of History. See *Retrospective Exhibition of Painting Development (1739-1980)*, Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, Kaohsiung, 1994, pp.351-353.

reflection of the rise of national confidence and cultural pride, both political parties and the TFAM actively promoted contemporary Taiwan art nationally and internationally. In the early 1990s, the KMT began establishing cultural centres in major cities abroad to promote Taiwan's cultural achievements.³⁴⁴ In addition, the TFAM toured large-scale exhibitions of Taiwan art;³⁴⁵ initiated exhibition exchanges; and in 1995 began officially participating in the Venice Biennale (see Chapter One).³⁴⁶ Based on the TFAM's exhibition records, Japan featured prominently in the TFAM's international programmes. Between 1983 and 1990, for example, the number of exhibitions from Japan exceeded those from any other country at the TFAM;³⁴⁷ and it was one of the first countries represented in the TFAM's exhibition programme.³⁴⁸ Moreover, the TFAM's first museum-level overseas exhibition exchange was with a Japanese museum.³⁴⁹ In order to understand the significance of Japan in the TFAM's

³⁴⁴ The first 'Taipei Culture Center' opened in New York in 1991, and two more have been established in Paris and Tokyo. These cultural centres are directly or indirectly affiliated with the Taiwan government's Taipei Economic and Cultural Offices. Managed by Taiwan's recently established Ministry of Culture (formerly the Council for Cultural Affairs), these cultural centres initiate and promote cultural activities which, according to their website, have played a 'significant role in enhancing Taiwan's cultural image and promoting international cultural exchanges [and] have great market potential'. <http://english.cca.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=14323&CtNode=4215> (accessed 25/10/2011- this site has since been removed).

³⁴⁵ These exhibitions included (listed in order to the countries mentioned): *Messages from Taipei* (1989), *Taipei-New York: Confrontation with Modernism* (1991), *Taipei-Paris: Confrontation Entre Huit Artistes* (1994), *Art Taiwan* (1995).

³⁴⁶ As stated in Chapter One, during Director Chang Chen-yu's brief tenure (Sept. 1995 – Sept. 1996) there was a notable decline in the number of incoming and outgoing international exhibitions presented by the TFAM.

³⁴⁷ Between 1983 and 1990, the most frequently represented countries in the TFAM international programmes included Japan (fifteen exhibitions); Germany (ten exhibitions); United States (seven exhibitions); France (six exhibitions). TFAM, *Exhibition Review*, 2008, pp.14-49.

³⁴⁸ *Modern Japanese Lacquer Art and New American Paperworks* were the TFAM's first overseas exhibitions and both opened in Dec. 1983. See *Taipei Fine Arts Museum: Exhibition Review – 25 Years*, TFAM, 2008, p.241; Lai Ying-ying, *A Reflexive Study on the TFAM*, PhD, 2008.

³⁴⁹ In 1986 and 1988 the TFAM was involved in an exchange exhibition of 'print arts' with Japan. However, the first *contemporary* international exhibition exchange was *Messages from Taipei* that was presented at the (private) Hara Museum in Tokyo in 1989. This exhibition was preceded by *Exhibition of Contemporary Art in Japan* presented at the TFAM in 1986. Presenting works by fourteen artists, *Messages from Taipei* featured primarily non-figurative works including ink and abstract painting and sculpture which the TFAM Director, Huang Kuang-nan, described as 'Chinese modern art'. According to the director of the Hara Museum

international programmes, it is necessary to examine briefly its broader mediatory and symbolic role in Taiwan's quest for international recognition.

The role of Japan and 'Asia' in Taiwan's national imaginary

Notwithstanding the repressive effects of Japanese colonial rule, characterised by military control and cultural indoctrination,³⁵⁰ in the context of Taiwan's development and its identity, many Taiwanese relate to this period with a sense of nostalgia. Japan played a critical role in the modernisation of Taiwan,³⁵¹ and some anti-KMT advocates claim Japan contributed more significantly to Taiwan's development than the Chinese did during the first decade at least of KMT rule, which is widely regarded by scholars as a period of rampant inflation, corruption, and repression.³⁵² As mentioned in the Introduction, the period of Japanese colonial rule is also synonymous with the rise of *Taiwanese* consciousness and its legacy has become crucial to the

Message from Taipei revealed an 'an unmistakably Asian sensibility'. *Messages from Taipei*, TFAM, Taipei, 1986, n.p.

³⁵⁰ Memories of the repressive effects of Japanese colonisation and the rise of Taiwanese resistance have engendered amongst some Taiwanese a sense of resentment towards the Japanese. Scholars have documented the Japanese government's system of rigid military and cultural control. For example, Kerr has described how Taiwanese were mobilised into neighbourhood units and community organisations, described as a *pao-chia* system (or *hoko* system in Japanese) designed to maintain law and order, and was a form of social conditioning. Also, Patricia Tsurumi has discussed the effects of Japanese rule on education and employment, and the power imbalance between the Japanese and Taiwanese in government. See Kerr, *Formosa: Licensed Revolution*, 1974, p.61; Tsurumi, *Japanese Colonial Education in Taiwan*, 1977. Also see Chen Ching-chih, *Japanese Socio-Political Control in Taiwan 1895-1945*, PhD thesis, Harvard University, 1973, pp.239-240.

³⁵¹ See for example Gold, *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle*, 1986, pp.32-47; Tsurumi, *Japanese Colonial Education in Taiwan*, 1977; Tien, *The Great Transition*, 1989, pp.18-22, 33-34. In recognition of Japan's contribution to Taiwan's modernisation, the term 日據 (*ri ju*), meaning "Japanese occupation", was often substituted by 日治 (*ri zhi*) meaning Japanese rule/governance.

³⁵² See for example, Tien, *The Great Transition*, 1989, pp.2-3; Gold, *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle*, 1986, pp.50-60. On the media and censorship: Marc Cohen, *Taiwan at the Crossroads: Human Rights, Political Development and Social Change on the Beautiful Island*, Asia Resource Centre, Washington D.C, p.141; Ralph Clough, 'Taiwan under Nationalist Rule 1949-1982', in *The Cambridge History of China*, Roderick MacFarquhar and John K. Fairbank (eds.), vol. 15, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p.845; Mei Wen-li, 'The Intellectuals on Formosa', *The China Quarterly*, vol. 15, July-Sept. 1963, p.67. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0305741000021329> (accessed 4/6/2010).

construction of Taiwan's identity, and is often invoked in identity discourses differentiating Taiwan from China.³⁵³

In Taiwan's cultural imaginary, Japan constitutes 'an object of desire',³⁵⁴ and is viewed as the 'honorary West'.³⁵⁵ It is recognised internationally as the first modern Asian nation and, by the early 1990s, it had become a major economic power in the world.³⁵⁶ Japan was viewed as a paragon of modernisation, innovation and internationalism, to which many Asian countries, including Taiwan, aspired. Seeking to establish itself as a Pan-Asian hub, Japan's economic investments³⁵⁷ and cultural influence in the region were significant.³⁵⁸ While Japanese art³⁵⁹ and popular culture were attracting global attention, in Taiwan, a phenomenon described as 'Japanophilia' (or *ha ri*

³⁵³ See Introduction pp.19-20.

³⁵⁴ Leo Ching, "'Give me Japan and Nothing Else": Postcoloniality, Identity, and the Traces of Colonialism', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Duke University Press, vol. 99, no. 4, Fall 2000, pp.764-765. http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/south_atlantic_quarterly/toc/saq99.4.html (accessed 4/8/2010).

³⁵⁵ Shih Shu-mei, 'Globalisation and the (in)significance of Taiwan', *Postcolonial Studies*, vol.6, issue 2, Institute of Postcolonial Studies, Melbourne, July 2003, p.145. DOI: 10.1080/13688790308105 (accessed 7/10/2010).

³⁵⁶ Conrad Totman, *A History of Japan*, (2nd ed.), Blackwell, Oxford, 2005.

³⁵⁷ Japan became a major investor and source of financial aid particularly amongst the ASEAN member states, comprising Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Singapore. For more information on Japan's role in these ASEAN countries see Paul Kennedy, *Preparing for the Twenty-first Century*, Random House, New York, 1993. For more information on Japan's economic influence on the 'Four Asian Tigers' (Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Korea) see Peter J. Katzenstein and Takashi Shiraishi (eds.), *Network Power: Japan and Asia*, Cornell University, New York, 1997.

³⁵⁸ The formation of Asian cultural institutes such as the *Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre* for UNESCO established in 1971 in Tokyo as a 'non-profit organisation for Asia and the Pacific regional activities'; and the Asian Art Museum which opened in 1999 in Fukuoka, a city which promotes itself as 'a gateway to continental Asian culture since ancient times' are just two examples of the ways in which Japan sought to establish itself as Asia's 'cultural centre'. The Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU). <http://www.accu.or.jp/jp/en/about/index.html> (accessed 14/2/2011). Fukuoka Asian Art Museum is the only museum in the world that systematically collects and exhibits Asian modern and contemporary art. http://faam.city.fukuoka.lg.jp/eng/about/abt_index.html (accessed 25/3/2010).

³⁵⁹ For example, Japanese contemporary art featured in major exhibitions and biennials held internationally. A selection of these exhibitions include *Against Nature: Japanese Art in the Eighties* (1989-1991); *Japan Art Today: Elusive Perspectives/Changing Visions* (1990-91); *Zones of Love: Contemporary Art from Japan* (1991); *Japanese Art After 1945-Scream against the Sky* (1995); and *Japan Today* (1996). Japanese artists Tatsuo Miyajima (Miyajima, Tatsuo), Takashi Murakami (Murakami, Takashi), Yasumasa Morimura (Morimura, Yasumasa) and Yukinori Yanagi (Yanagi, Yukinori) were particularly prominent in these exhibitions.

哈日)³⁶⁰ emerged, characterised by a fascination with 'all things Japanese' – including animation, pop music, and TV dramas.³⁶¹ This trend was manifest in the visual art field, as works by Yang Mao-lin and Hung Tung-lu (洪東祿), whose works I later discuss attest.³⁶² It was also prevalent in the 'rediscovery' and preservation of Japanese architectural and cultural relics from the period of colonisation.³⁶³ President Lee, who was Japanese-educated and maintained links with Japan, supported and, some might argue, promoted developing stronger connections between Taiwan and Japan. In a much publicised interview with a Japanese journalist from the *Asahi Daily*, Lee called attention to his affiliations with and penchant for Japan, and at the same time declared his antipathy towards the former KMT government describing them as a 'foreign power [...] that came to rule the Taiwanese.'³⁶⁴ This inevitably raised the ire of the Chinese government who viewed it as an expression of Taiwan-China separatism, contributing to the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis. In response to Lee's statement, Mei Dean-E created a work provocatively entitled *Taiwan Loves Japan/Japan Loves Taiwan* (1998), which is discussed in Chapter Three.

After the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, however, Japan's economic power diminished, and China began exerting greater economic and cultural influence

³⁶⁰ The term 'ha' (in Hoklo) means 'to be fond of' and 'ri' in Mandarin is an abbreviation of 'Riben' meaning Japan. As Taylor points out, initially it was used in the context of popular culture, but later gained currency in academic discourse. Taylor, 'Reading History through the Built Environment', in *Cultural, Ethnic, and Political Nationalism*, 2005, p.182.

³⁶¹ For a more detailed analysis of the impact of Japanese popular culture and, in particular, of the 'Hello Kitty' phenomenon in Taiwan and on debates on identity, see Yu-fen Ko, 'Consuming Differences: "Hello Kitty" and the Identity Crisis in Taiwan', *Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 6, no.2, 2003, pp. 175-189.

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13688790308106#preview> (accessed 5/7/2010)

³⁶² Yang's and Hung's Japanese *manga* and *anime*-inspired works are discussed in Chapter Four and later in this chapter respectively.

³⁶³ Taylor, 'Reading History', in *Cultural, Ethnic, and Political Nationalism*, 2005, p.174.

³⁶⁴ Ryotaro Shiba, 'Interview with Lee Teng-hui', *Asahi Weekly*, 6–13 May 1994. For an English transcript of this interview see *Taipei Times*, 22 August 2002.

www.fas.org/news/taiwan/1994/s940721-taiwan2.htm (accessed 30/10/2011).

in Asia.³⁶⁵ Although the Asian Financial Crisis did not affect Taiwan to the same extent as it did in Japan and other countries in the region,³⁶⁶ the fear of economic recession, marginalisation, and of being overshadowed by China impacted significantly on Taiwan's national confidence.³⁶⁷ Taiwan's economy is primarily export-oriented,³⁶⁸ and is therefore susceptible to the changing gravity of domestic and global markets. Excluded from most UN-related world forums,³⁶⁹ the national government employed 'creative' measures, variously described as 'dollar diplomacy', 'vacation diplomacy', and 'golf diplomacy' to expand its international networks and markets.³⁷⁰ Following Japan's example, Taiwan's government developed stronger links in Asia, and particularly Southeast Asia, where it became the largest source of foreign investment in the mid-1990s.³⁷¹ Taiwan's 'southward advancing policy' was driven not only by

³⁶⁵ Meredith Jung-Eng Woo, 'A Century After the Unparalleled Invasion: East Asia After the Crisis', in *Ten Years After: Revisiting the Asian Financial Crisis*, Bhumika Muchhala (ed.), Asia Program, Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, Washington, Oct. 2007, p.60. http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/tenyearsafter_2007_11.pdf (accessed 4/9/2011).

³⁶⁶ The countries most affected by the Asian Crisis included Japan, Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea. On the effects of the Asian Economic Crisis in Taiwan see Cheng Tun-jen, 'Transforming Taiwan's Economic Structure in the 20th Century', in *Taiwan in the Twentieth Century: A Retrospective View*, (a *China Quarterly* special edition), Richard Louis Edmonds and Steven M. Goldstein (eds.), Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, 2001, pp. 19-36.

³⁶⁷ On the impact of the Asian Financial Crisis on Taiwan see Cheng Tun-jen, 'Transforming Taiwan's Economic Structure', in *Taiwan in the Twentieth Century*, 2001, pp.19-36 (especially pp.34-36).

³⁶⁸ Gold, in *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle*, 1986, pp.75-96.

³⁶⁹ For example, Taiwan is excluded from the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) plus three (China, Japan, and South Korea), and from the G7, G8 and G11 and G20 groups of developed and developing nations. However, Taiwan has been admitted into APEC (the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation) and into the WTO (World Trade Organisation) but under the name 'Chinese-Taipei'. Admission into these two organisations is based on economic rather than national autonomy.

³⁷⁰ Willem Van Kemenade, *China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Inc: The Dynamics of a New Empire*, Knopf, New York, 1997, p.113 cited in Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan*, 2004, p.7.

³⁷¹ According to Jacobs and Liu between 1994 and 1995 Taiwan was the largest investor in Southeast Asia. Jacobs and Liu, 'Lee Teng-hui', *China Quarterly*, 2007, pp. 375-393. It is important to note that Taiwan was investing in countries including Malaysia and Thailand from the late 1980s but after President Lee's 'unofficial' visit to several of the ASEAN member states in February 1994, the government devised a 'southward advancing' policy which promoted increased capital investment, bilateral trade and developmental aid programmes. See Gerald Tan, 'The Next NICs of Asia,' *Third World Quarterly* 14, no. 1, 1993, pp.57-73 cited in Chen Kuan-hsing 'The Imperialist Eye: The Cultural Imaginary of a Sub-empire and a Nation-state', *positions: east asia cultures critique* vol.8, no.1, 2000, pp.9-76. <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/positions/v008/8.1chen.html> (accessed 8/10/2011); Matthew

economic opportunism; it was also a strategic means by which Taiwan could attract political recognition, and curb China's growing influence over Taiwan's economy as increasing numbers of local businesses were now investing in China.³⁷²

This upsurge of political and economic interest in Asia was mirrored in the visual art field which began to focus more on contemporary Asian art. During the 1980s, exhibitions from Asia were held at the TFAM but, as indicated, these were generally quasi-official, focusing on traditional art forms, and mainly originating from Japan, and occasionally South Korea.³⁷³ By the late 1990s, however, contemporary Asian art had become more popular, internationally and also in Taiwan. In 1998 the TFAM presented at least three major exhibitions from Asia including *Site of Desire*, and an important international touring exhibition, *Traditions/Tensions: Contemporary Art in Asia*, which was the first large-scale exhibition of contemporary art from Southeast Asia held at the TFAM.³⁷⁴ A year prior, *River: New Asian Art – a Dialogue in Taipei* (1997), organised by the Taipei County government, and curated by JJ Shih (石瑞仁),³⁷⁵ displayed works by contemporary artists from Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Vietnam and Taiwan. This exhibition was significant, not only because it was one of the first major exhibitions of *contemporary* art from Asia

Smith, 'Go South: Taiwanese Follow the Money', *Asia Times Online*, 27 Aug. 2002. <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/DH27Ad03.html> (accessed 12/12/2011).

³⁷² During the 1980s and early 1990s Taiwan investors were offered special tariffs and other conditions to encourage them to invest. David Shambaugh, (special issue: *Greater China*), vol. 136, Dec. 1993, p.656. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0305741000032288> (accessed 6/8/2010); n.a. 'Taiwanese Investors Growing Increasingly Disenchanted with China', *China News*, 10/10/1995, (n.p). For a theoretical discussion on this southward advancing policy in relation to the processes of decolonisation see Kuan-hsing Chen (Chen Kuan-hsing), *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization*, Duke University Press, 2010, pp.17-64.

³⁷³ Exhibitions held at the TFAM from Korea during the 1980s included *Contemporary Korean Art Exhibition* (1984) and *Hong Ik Fibre and Plastic Arts* (1989).

³⁷⁴ This exhibition was organised by New York's Asia Society and curated by Apinan Poshyananda from Thailand. It included artists from India, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and South Korea (although the latter is not strictly part of Southeast Asia). The other exhibitions included *Site of Desire* and *Asian Traditions/Modern Expressions: Asian-American Artists and Abstraction*. TFAM: *Exhibition Review*, 2008 p.209.

³⁷⁵ Shih was later commissioned to curate Taiwan's representation at the 1999 Venice Biennale.

shown in Taiwan, but also because it was initiated locally, was site-specific, and also promoted cross-cultural exchange.³⁷⁶

The decline of Taiwan nationalism in art

The Asian Financial Crisis and the rise of China contributed towards a downturn in the local art market, which, during the 1990s at least, was primarily investment-oriented.³⁷⁷ Increasingly, local commercial galleries focused on art from other Asian countries, including art from China which was attracting global attention.³⁷⁸ Works by Taiwan's younger generation of artists also became more popular as they were more affordable. Lee Yali (李亞俐), the manager of one of Taiwan's first commercial modern art galleries, observes that the prices demanded by some of Taiwan's more established artists were generally over-inflated. She explains that 'during the boom years, between 1989 and 1992' when these artists became better known, 'there was an excess of art being produced and a surplus of cash'.³⁷⁹ In her view:

...competition was fierce as there was so much capital and artists were producing too many works. Most artists around the age of forty are now too expensive, not just compared to China, but also to New York. I don't represent these artists because of their ridiculous prices.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁶ For further information on this exhibition see: Sophie McIntyre, 'River New Asian Art in Taipei', *Art Asia Pacific*, issue 19, 1998, pp.68-73. Also see Huang Hai-ming, 'Taiwanese Art in the 1990s', in *Taiwan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale – A Retrospective*, 2010, pp.189-190.

³⁷⁷ During the 1990s, the art market and certain commercial art galleries which opened during this decade have been described by Lee Yali as a 'stock market' and as 'real estate businesses'. See Lee Yali, Interview with Author, Taipei, 1995.

³⁷⁸ As Wang Jia-ji observes, after the 1995 Taipei Art Fair, galleries began to diversify and invest more in Mainland Chinese art. Hsieh Su-chen claims that more than seventy per cent of galleries at this art fair represented Mainland Chinese art. She argues that Chinese art offered investors greater scope given the size and range of the Chinese art market. Wang Jia-ji, 台灣的位置—1990年代台灣當代藝術的狀態 — (Taiwan's Position: Taiwan's Contemporary Art in the 90s - Part I), 典藏藝術 (Art & Collection), no. 98, Oct. 2000, pp.76-78 (in Chinese); Hsieh Su-chen, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

³⁷⁹ Lee Yali, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei. Lungmen was one of the first galleries to open in 1976. The gallery was established by painter Yang Hsing-sheng who returned from the US and, according to the present Director, Lee Yali, Yang set up this business to sell his own paintings and it also represented abstract expressionist artists from the Eastern and Fifth Moon groups from the 1960s and it was one of Taiwan's first and most respected commercial galleries.

³⁸⁰ Lee Yali, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

In addition to the fact that many Taiwan mid-career artists' works had become over-priced, many art writers, curators, gallerists and collectors believed that artists who had been focusing on national identity issues had been over-exposed, and their works had become repetitive.³⁸¹ This was exemplified in an article by a local art critic, Lee Chao-ming (李朝明), who claims that local artists' works, which focused exclusively on concepts of identity, were devoid of meaning, and lacked the 'spirit of *bentuyishi*' (Taiwan consciousness).³⁸² Lee's comments were echoed by curators including Kao Chien-hui (高千惠) who insisted that Taiwan artists must repudiate essentialist conceptions of *Taiwanese* identity in order to cultivate a broad view of the world.³⁸³ According to Wang Jia-ji this '*bentuhua* ideology' (本土化意識), or 'nativised consciousness', was driven by anti-China sentiment incited by both political parties, which, he judges, was just as superficial and narrow as the 'Greater China' (大中國意識) ideology promoted by the former KMT.³⁸⁴ Wang claimed artists had become 'too politically and ideologically driven', and market-oriented.³⁸⁵ Furthermore, the gallery manager, Hsieh Su-chen (謝素貞), who had been a strong advocate of Taiwan consciousness in art, observed:

³⁸¹ For a discussion on the (over)representation of Taiwan art in the museum sector see Chang, *A Study on the Influence of Government Policy*, PhD, 1997, pp.190-192.

³⁸² Lee Chao-ming,

九0年代台灣藝術市場的發展與分化—「本土化」與「國際化」的幾個可能 ('The Development and Differentiation of the 1990s Taiwan Art Market – the Possibilities of "Localisation" and "Internationalisation"'), 雄獅美術 (*Lion Art*), no. 283, Sept. 1994, p.40 (in Chinese).

³⁸³ Kao Chien-hui, 火車快飛·火車快飛—從本土化的速度到國際化的變數 ('Trains Fly by From the Speed of Localisation to the Variables of Internationalisation'), 藝術家 (*Artist*), no. 225, Feb. 1994, pp.178-179 (in Chinese). In 2001 Kao was nominated to curate Taiwan's representation at the Venice Biennale (see Chapter Seven),

³⁸⁴ Wang Jia-ji, 台灣的位置—政治下的台灣當代藝術 ('Taiwan's Position — Taiwan Contemporary Art and its Political Context'), 典藏藝術 (*Art & Collection*), no. 96, Sept. 2009, p.122 (in Chinese).

³⁸⁵ Wang Jia-ji, 台灣的位置—1990年代台灣當代藝術的狀態 (二) ('Taiwan's Position: Taiwan Contemporary Art in the 1990s- Part II'), 典藏藝術 (*Art & Collection*), no. 100, Jan 2001, pp.160-163 (in Chinese).

[...] these *bentu* artists just paint political issues but they don't really think about Taiwan's identity. They just want fame and don't know what's good or bad. The younger generation isn't like this.³⁸⁶

Echoing these concerns, Oliver Ye (Ye Zhongxun, 葉忠訓), gallery dealer, collector and patron of several *bentu* painters during the early 1990s, including Yang Mao-lin, reported that he grew increasingly disillusioned with these artists because they had become 'just like businesspeople'.³⁸⁷

As the beneficiaries of Taiwan's Economic Miracle, this mid-career generation of *bentu* artists had become significantly reliant on Taiwan's economy and art market, and on the support of local collectors and gallerists such as Oliver Ye and Hsieh Su-chen. The realisation that national identity issues were no longer fashionable in the art market prompted many *bentu* artists, such as Yang Mao-lin, to turn to broader global issues on the basis that

...I'm only an artist. The situation is too complicated and there's nothing I can do about it. As long as Taiwan is nationalised it's like a medicine and we will be cured. Most of the issues now are politically related and the argument is based on whether we want to become a country or be part of China. We're moving at such a slow pace now. It's like a handball - there is no more pressure in it.³⁸⁸

By the end of 1990s, identity discourses in art that centred on the idea of 'the nation' effectively reached 'a dead end'.³⁸⁹ Most members of Taiwan's art community, including gallerists and artists such as Hsieh and Yang who were ardent Taiwan nationalists, admitted that issues concerning Taiwan's identity had become over-politicised and narrow-minded based on the

³⁸⁶ Hsieh named Yang Mao-lin and Wu Tien-chang as artists who were potentially prone to this, but she also stated that they had realised this and had moved on to explore other issues that were not so ideologically oriented. Hsieh Su-chen, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei. For a discussion on the privileges these *bensheng* artists were receiving see Chang, *A Study on the Influence of Government Policy*, PhD, 1997, pp.190-192. As discussed in Chapter Eight, Hsieh subsequently moved to Beijing in early 2000s.

³⁸⁷ Oliver Ye, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei. See Chapter Four (pp.209-210) for more information on this collector and his relationship to Yang.

³⁸⁸ Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

³⁸⁹ Lee Chao-ming, 'The Development and Differentiation', *Lion Art*, 1994, p.40 (in Chinese). This was also the case in other art fields, such as in contemporary music and literature. See Lin, 'Toward a New Identity', *China Information*, 2003, pp.93, 98; Hsiao, 'The Indigenization of Taiwanese Literature' in *Cultural, Ethnic, and Political Nationalism*, 2005, pp.144-145.

reunification/independence issue which had reached a stalemate.³⁹⁰ Debates became increasingly parochial and divisive, centring on issues of ethnicity which the DPP and KMT exploited in their efforts to mobilise support and promote their respective political agendas.³⁹¹ Although the idea of the Taiwan nation did not exactly disappear in people's minds, it is the contention of this thesis that by the end of the 1990s the quest for an 'authentic' and distinctive cultural identity in visual art had significantly declined. This was not only driven by the art market, but, as noted, a new generation of artists had emerged in Taiwan, who had no first-hand experience of the effects of martial law, and of censorship and cultural suppression. Unlike their predecessors, they were not driven by a desire to investigate, define and assert Taiwan's 'nation-ness'. Rather, they sought to explore and express their *individual* sense of identity and pursue international opportunities. As the sociologist, Wang Horng-Luen (汪宏倫), acknowledges, the debate has moved on and the issue now is not whether people in Taiwan perceive themselves as belonging to a 'nation' or not, but rather whether the rest of the world considers Taiwan worthy of 'nation' status.³⁹²

This shift in Taiwan's identity trajectory was visible in the museological representation of art, which became increasingly 'internationalised'. It is important to note here that, politically, there had been a change of leaders in the Taipei municipal government which supervised the TFAM. In 1998, Ma

³⁹⁰ The KMT and DPP were united in their rejection of the PRC's 'one China, two systems' approach; but they were opposed to each other in their preferred policies. While the KMT agreed to the principle of 'one China', meaning the ROC; the DPP promoted 'one China, one Taiwan'. Andy Chang and T.Y. Wang, 'Taiwanese or Chinese? Independence or Unification?: An Analysis of Generational Differences in Taiwan', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, vol.40, no.1-2, Sage, 2005, pp.29, 43. DOI: 10.1177/0021909605052938 (accessed 21/2/2011); T.Y. Wang (Wang T.Y.), 'National Identity and Democratization in Taiwan: An Introduction', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, vol.40, no.1-2, Apr. 2005, pp.5-12. DOI: 10.1177/0021909605052931 (accessed 16/9/2010).

³⁹¹ For further discussion on the 'ethnification of politics' see Hsiao, 'The Indigenization of Taiwanese Literature', in *Cultural, Ethnic, and Political Nationalism*, 2005, p.144.

³⁹² Horng-luen Wang (Wang Horng-luen), 'Rethinking the Global and the National: Reflections on National Imaginations in Taiwan', *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 17, no. 4, Sage, London, 2000, p.110. DOI: 10.1177/02632760022051338 (accessed 12/9/2010).

Ying-jeou (馬英九) (1998-2006), succeeded the pro-independence DPP Mayor Chen Shui-bian. Notably, Ma was Hong Kong-born,³⁹³ and although questions were raised in the media regarding his affiliations to China, his popular election indicated that 'ethnic' issues between the *benshengren* and *waishengren* had waned.³⁹⁴ The academic, Liao Hsien-hao (廖咸浩),³⁹⁵ who was appointed Director of the Department of Cultural Affairs under Ma Ying-jeou in the Taipei city government (2003-2006), observes that, while Ma was careful to maintain the support of Taiwanese nationalists, he actively promoted internationalisation and, ultimately, closer ties with China.³⁹⁶ Under Ma's supervision, the TFAM director Lin Mun-Lee (林曼麗) (Oct 1996-July 2000), who had been appointed by the former DPP government, implemented this strategy, which endeavoured to closely align local artistic needs and interests with regional and global cultural trends. Although Lin's pro-independence leanings are well known, unlike her predecessor, Chang Chen-yu (張振宇), she promoted internationalism, and this was most apparent in the exhibitions *Site of Desire* and *Close to Open*.

Site of Desire – Asia in the world

The 1998 Taipei Biennial: Site of Desire (hereafter, *Site of Desire* 慾望場域) (13 June-6 Sept 1998) has been widely acclaimed by local artists and critics in Taiwan as the TFAM's first 'truly international' biennial, despite the fact it

³⁹³ Ma Ying-jeou was born in Hong Kong and his father was a KMT official. He was educated at Harvard and also at Taiwan University.

³⁹⁴ Corcuff and Harrison describe how, during the lead-up to the elections, Ma adopted the popular identity label 'New Taiwanese', coined by Lee Teng-hui, to demonstrate his 'loyalty' to Taiwan. He famously declared, 'I am a New Taiwanese, who has grown up on the rice of Taiwan and loves Taiwan.' Corcuff, 'Taiwan's "Mainlanders," New Taiwanese?', in *Memories of the Future*, 2002, p.187. On Ma's electoral campaign also see Harrison, *Legitimacy, Meaning and Knowledge*, 2006, p.197.

³⁹⁵ Liao (Sebastian) Hsien-hao is Professor of English and Comparative Literature in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at National Taiwan University.

³⁹⁶ This comment was made in conversation by Liao to me but this issue was discussed in a paper given by Liao Sydney in 2007. Liao Hsien-hao, in conversation with the Author, Taiwan Studies conference, Melbourne 9/12/2010; Liao, Hsien-hao, *Why Don't Ask the Chinese to Execute this Project?: Cultural Policy, Identity and Transnationalit* (sic), lecture presented, University of Western Sydney, 27/9/2007. For more information on Liao and Ma's cultural role Chapter Seven pp.343-344.

featured works exclusively from Northeast Asia (fig. 2.1).³⁹⁷ In contrast to its precursor, *Quest for Identity* (1996), which exclusively presented artists' works from Taiwan and focused on 'the land' and notions of identity and subjectivity, *Site of Desire* transcended issues of national identity. It endeavoured to re-position Taiwan art in a regional *and* international cultural context, forging a new sense of identity and place that celebrated cultural pluralism within a framework of Asian transregionalism. Curated by Fumio Nanjo from Japan, the exhibition organisers from the TFAM declared the exhibition signified a 'revolutionary change'³⁹⁸ in the internationalisation of Taiwan art and museological practice. The exhibition presented works by thirty-six artists from four countries including Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, and also, notably, China. Notwithstanding its curatorial focus on Northeast Asia, the exhibition's objectives were fundamentally international, which was exemplified in the curatorial objectives and themes, the exhibition publicity, and the simple fact that it was the TFAM's first international biennial.³⁹⁹

The international biennial/triennial is commonly regarded by national and city government agencies and some members of the art community as a signifier of a culturally progressive nation and, until the 1990s, most of these were held in Europe and America.⁴⁰⁰ However, by the end of the 1990s the number of biennials/triennials in the Asia-Pacific region exceeded those held in Europe

³⁹⁷ Shih Rae-jen (JJ Shih), 藝術家場域中的欲望會診 ('Examination of Desire in the Art Field'), 藝術家 (Artist), no. 279, Aug. 1998, p.339 (in Chinese); Liu Yung-jen, 無情之慾, 渴望之域—南條版本的台北雙年展 ('Merciless Desire, Desirable Field – Nanjo's version of the Taipei Biennial'), 藝術家 (Artist), no. 279, 1998, p.344 (in Chinese); Lu, Rong-ze (Victoria Lu) and Huang Pao-ping, 座談會—台灣當代藝術的國際空間 ('Symposium – International Space of Taiwan Contemporary Art'), 藝術家 (Artist), no. 279, Aug. 1998, p.356 (in Chinese); Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

³⁹⁸ TFAM, '2008 Taipei Biennial'.

<http://www.taipeibiennial.org/2008/ContentPage/Contents.aspx?ID=iWtQXTY5yerSII9xW63dIAUWv5DBFdu1&SubID=iWtQXTY5yepbYPOReEQvvxHGWPpzIVBK&Language=iWtQXTY5yepbYPOReEQvvxIHCRdaRaeW> (accessed 3/9/2011).

³⁹⁹ The first Taipei Biennial occurred in 1992 but it wasn't until 1998 (after competition-based exhibitions and *Quest for Identity* which exclusively featured local artists) that it became a curated international exhibition.

⁴⁰⁰ The earliest and most prominent of these were: the Venice Biennale (est. 1895), Sao Paulo Biennial (1951), and Documenta (1955) in Germany.

and America.⁴⁰¹ It is widely acknowledged that the 'biennial fever' that swept across Asia during the 1990s was a product of globalisation and the rise of Asia as the axis of power shifted from the traditionally dominant Euro-American centres. According to John Clark, the mushrooming of international biennials in cities across Asia reflects this trajectory, which he describes as an 'attempt to make Euramerica come to Asia'.⁴⁰² *Site of Desire* was unequivocally a response to this 'biennial fever'. In her discussion on the rise of biennials in the Asia-Pacific region, the TFAM director Lin Mun-lee, underlines the need for Taiwan to remain 'internationally competitive',⁴⁰³ and the TFAM claims the biennial is a 'crucial strategy for entering the international stage'.⁴⁰⁴ Given the TFAM's international ambitions, it is not surprising that *Site of Desire* was one of the first curated international biennials presented in Asia.⁴⁰⁵ Notably it opened two years prior to China's inaugural international biennial held in Shanghai in 2000.⁴⁰⁶

Taiwan's international aspirations were also exemplified in this exhibition on a curatorial level, with the appointment of Fumio Nanjo as guest curator, who played a critical role helping the museum extend its global outreach. During the 1990s, Nanjo was one of the most influential and prominent curators in the

⁴⁰¹ For more information on the rise of biennials/triennials in Asia see

<http://www.aaa.org.hk/onlineprojects/bitri/en/didyouknow.aspx> (accessed 20/3/2011).

⁴⁰² John Clark, 'The Charm of Foreign Parts', *Diaaologue*, Asia Art Archive's online Newsletter - Aug. 2003, <http://www.aaa.org.hk/newsletter/diaaologue.html#diaaa06> (accessed 19/2/2011).

⁴⁰³ Lin Mun-lee, 一九九八台北雙年展突顯亞洲觀點 ('1998 Taipei Biennial Highlights Asian Points of View'), 藝術家 (*Artist*), July 1998, pp.306-307 (in Chinese).

⁴⁰⁴ See www.taipeiabiennial.org/2008/ContentPage/Contents (accessed 18/3/2010 - this site has since been removed).

⁴⁰⁵ Prior to this time there were some country-based and open-call biennials/triennials held in India (1968), Hong Kong (1975), and Bangladesh (1981). The Tokyo Biennale (founded in 1952 and ended in 1990) and the Sydney Biennial (founded in 1973) in this region. The Asia-Pacific Triennial (estab. 1993) was one of the first that focused on contemporary art from the Asia-Pacific. For more information see Asia Art Archive.

<http://www.aaa.org.hk/onlineprojects/bitri/en/index.aspx> (accessed 22/2/2011).

⁴⁰⁶ In 1996 the first Shanghai Biennial was held but it wasn't until 2000 that it became an international and curated exhibition.

international art field;⁴⁰⁷ and, according to the Philippine art critic, Patrick Flores, one of the first Asian curators to gain 'transnational stature' working across and between different countries and cultural contexts.⁴⁰⁸ In 1995 Nanjo curated the landmark exhibition, *TransCulture*, as part of the Venice Biennale, and in 1997 he was the curator of the Japanese pavilion.⁴⁰⁹ In the same year he was invited by the TFAM as the only 'foreign' judge to help select works for Taiwan's representation at the Venice Biennale.⁴¹⁰ The fact that Nanjo had significant curatorial experience, an international reputation and valuable connections and was willing to utilise these in raising the profile of the 1998 Taipei Biennial was a critical factor and key to the exhibition's success, nationally and internationally.⁴¹¹ As the TFAM's first curated international biennial, it set a precedent for subsequent Taipei Biennials, and provided the foundation for a new curatorial partnership between international and Taiwan curators. The museum director, Lin Mun-Lee observes that the TFAM's cooperation with international curators, such as Nanjo, has been crucial to the opening up and internationalisation of Taiwan's art field.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁷ In the late 1980s Nanjo co-curated *Against Nature: Japanese Art in the Eighties*. <http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/ojs/index.php/transcultural/article/view/6175/1766> (accessed 24/6/2011). During the 1990s he was also on the selection panel of several exhibitions which had international significance, such as the Asia-Pacific Triennial.

⁴⁰⁸ Patrick D. Flores, *Critical Curation/Curatorial Critique*, The International Press of the Association of Art Critics, Oct. 2006. <http://www.aica-int.org/IMG/pdf/23.061218.PFlores.pdf> (accessed 11/12/2011).

⁴⁰⁹ The *Transculture* exhibition is discussed by John Clark in *Modern Asian Art*, 1998, p.275.

⁴¹⁰ In the same year as the Taipei Biennial, in 1998, Fumio Nanjo curated another exhibition of Taiwan art entitled *Contemporary Taiwanese Art Exhibition: The New Identity* in cooperation with MOMA Contemporary in Fukuoka and Dimension Endowment of Art, Taipei. This exhibition, which was held over three successive periods (27 Aug.-25 Oct. 1998), was reportedly the first exhibition of Taiwan art shown in Japan since *Message from Taipei* in 1989. Of the seven artists represented in *The New Identity*, five of the same artists featured in the 1997 Venice Biennale and in the 1998 *Taipei Biennial*. The exhibition included artists: Lee Ming-sheng, Mei Dean-E, and Yao Jui-chung (stage one); Hou Chun-ming and Chen Chien-bei (stage two); Chu Chia-hua and Wang Jun-jieh (stage three).

⁴¹¹ In an interview Fumio Nanjo remarked upon the large number of internationally renowned art curators, museum directors and scholars who attended the exhibition. Liu Li, 藝術家雜誌專訪南條史生：台北雙年展策展體驗 ['Interviewing Fumio Nanjo – the Experience of Curating the Taipei Biennial'], 藝術家 (Artist), July 1998, p.308 (in Chinese); also see Liu Yung-jen, 'Merciless Desire', *Artist*, 1998, p.344 (in Chinese).

⁴¹² Lin, '1998 Biennial Highlights', *Artist*, 1998, p.306 (in Chinese).

The positioning of Taipei as a world city was also a key element this Taipei Biennial sought to promote. In the front pages of the exhibition's catalogue, the words 'Bringing Taipei to the World' are writ large across a pink-toned monochromatic photographic image of a building site in Taipei's urban sprawl. Taipei was promoted as emblematic of the burgeoning Asian metropolis and narratives based on Asian modernity, urbanisation and transnational capitalism were interwoven through the exhibition. On a political level, the DPP⁴¹³ and KMT embraced this exhibition's projection of Taipei, as it helped integrate Taiwan further within the global cultural sphere; and helped distinguish Taiwan from China, defining it as a dynamic, cosmopolitan and global city in contrast to a culturally backward and homogenous Chinese province.

This phrase 'Bringing Taipei to the World' explicitly flaunts this outward-looking vision and, as a form of national branding, highlights Taipei's place within Asia and its connectivity to the world. With the rise of globalisation, the concept of branding the city and situating it within a global context had become widespread.⁴¹⁴ For example, after the 1997 handover, Hong Kong sought to re-establish itself in the global sphere and was re-branded 'Asia's World City';⁴¹⁵ while Shanghai, which had been described as 'The Paris of the East', was re-defined as a 'city of world significance.' Similarly, in Taiwan, the government was eager to promote Taipei as an 'international' and 'world-class' city – a strategy which was unequivocally politically expedient given the diplomatic issues associated with the words 'country' and 'Taiwan'.

⁴¹³ Prior to his defeat in the 1998 city elections, the DPP's Taipei Mayor, Chen Shui-bian appointed the new TFAM Director, Lin Mun-Lee.

⁴¹⁴ The Asian city became a popular subject in visual art discourse during this period as international touring exhibitions such as *Cities on the Move* attest. Curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Hou Hanru, *Cities on the Move* featured more than one hundred artists and explored the changing nature of Asian cities through Asian contemporary art and architecture.

⁴¹⁵ See <http://www.brandhk.gov.hk/en/#/> (accessed 20/4/2011).

Although *Site of Desire* was marketed as an international biennial and engaged in global issues, the curatorial objective of this exhibition was to bring together artists from these four countries and engender a sense of Pan-Asian 'regional solidarity'.⁴¹⁶ Notwithstanding the fact that the curator, and several of the participating Chinese artists, including Cai Guo-Qiang (蔡国强),⁴¹⁷ Xu Bing (徐冰) and also Yayoi Kusama from Japan lived overseas and were often defined as 'international', their works along with others in this exhibition, were contextualised in an *Asian* cultural framework. While acknowledging historical, ethnic and cultural differences between these artists and their works, this exhibition focused primarily on the characteristics they shared. According to the exhibition publicity, one of the central objectives of *Site of Desire* was to 're-affirm...the historical and cultural ties'⁴¹⁸ between these Northeast Asian countries, which were explored in relation to Asian modernisation, globalisation, and, somewhat paradoxically, Chinese tradition.

On a curatorial level, China, or more specifically Chinese cultural tradition, was a common reference point used to link artists' works from these four disparate Asian countries. The curator explained that, historically, these countries have a common racial and cultural heritage, which, he claims, derives from *Chinese* culture:

While the histories and present conditions of the northeast Asian regions differ, an examination of their pasts indicate their shared characteristics, including Chinese characters, the eating of rice, and the considerable influence of Confucianism and Buddhism. Moreover, in racial terms, the people of this region do not differ as greatly as those in other regions.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁶ Hsu Wen-rei, 'Subject of Desire: The 1998 Taipei Biennial', *Art Asia Pacific*, issue 22, 1999, pp.26-27. The cultural theorist Chen Kuan-hsing discusses the 'newly emerging form of 'pan-Asianism' in relation to the rhetoric on the 'rise' of Asia, and the 'West and the Rest problematic'. Kuan-hsing Chen, 'The Decolonizing Question', *Trajectories*, 1998, p.31.

⁴¹⁷ This is the artist's preferred spelling of his name with the hyphen included.

⁴¹⁸ *Site of Desire*, Taipei Biennial Press Release, TFAM, 1998.

⁴¹⁹ www.taipeibiennial.org/1998/PRESS.html (accessed 6/5/2010)

⁴¹⁹ Fumio Nanjo, 'Palimpsestus Urbanus', in *Site of Desire*, TFAM, Taipei, 1998, p.20.

Of course, not all these 'shared characteristics' originated in China.⁴²⁰ However, based on this statement and on the selection and interpretation of works in this exhibition (discussed below), Chinese cultural tradition is clearly viewed by the curator as a vital cultural source that unites and distinguishes these countries from other Asian countries. Having said that, the exhibition included only eight Chinese artists, compared with twelve Taiwan and nine Japanese artists; and seven South Korean artists. Visually, the exhibition did not reflect a strong Chinese focus despite the fact that, curatorially, it was clearly orientated towards China, which was playing an increasingly important role within the region and globally. It is my contention that, although subtle, this curatorial orientation towards China signifies a major shift in museological identity narratives during the 1990s at the TFAM, moving away from Taiwan-China separatist discourses. Although Taiwan-China relations were not explicitly referenced in the exhibition catalogue or publicity, in the catalogue introduction and artist essays the impact of ancient Chinese culture was foregrounded in this exhibition.

For example, in his explication of the curatorial theme based on 'desire', Nanjo discusses how Chinese emperors collected and traded their treasures, many of which, he notes, are housed in Taipei's National Palace Museum.⁴²¹ He draws attention to the influences of Confucianism and the Chinese written word in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, and to the fact that these influences have been absorbed into these countries' respective cultural and linguistic systems.⁴²² According to the curator, these two shared cultural traditions unify these four countries and distinguish them from other Asian countries.⁴²³

⁴²⁰ For example, Buddhism originated in India but was transmitted via China to the four countries represented in this exhibition.

⁴²¹ Nanjo in *Site of Desire*, 1998, p.17.

⁴²² Liu Li, 'Interviewing Fumio Nanjo', *Artist*, 1998, p.309 (in Chinese). It is relevant to note that South Korea no longer uses Hanbun (Chinese characters).

⁴²³ Fumio Nanjo quoted in Liu Li, 'Interviewing Fumio Nanjo', *Artist*, 1998, p.309 (in Chinese).

Furthermore, the exhibition's narrative on the influence of Chinese cultural heritage was reflected in the selection and description of artists' works in the exhibition. For example, the internationally recognised installation, *Classroom Calligraphy* (1995-1998), by the Chinese artist Xu Bing, featured in this exhibition. Nanjo remarks that this work reflects 'the desire to convey to the world the outstanding writing known as Chinese'.⁴²⁴ However, in this work the artist does not seek to preserve or celebrate the Chinese language but rather endeavours to deconstruct and subvert it. Xu utilises Chinese written characters and transforms them into the English alphabet, producing new, nonsensical words, thus debasing their original meaning. In this particular installation, audiences were encouraged to employ ink and brush to reconstruct their own words.

The enduring influence of Chinese civilisation on artists' works in the exhibition was also, according to the curator, reflected in the Taiwan artist Wang Jun-jieh's (王俊傑) work entitled *HB-1750* (fig. 2.2). In this futuristic, digitally enhanced and monumentally-large billboard, the artist focuses on universal issues relating to the human desire for youth and longevity. However, in this exhibition, the work is interpreted in relation to China's dynastic history and the desire for longevity and immortality.⁴²⁵ While some local critics questioned the *Chinese* orientation of this exhibition,⁴²⁶ the curator maintained the two key elements which unite and differentiate Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and China from other countries in Asia is that, to varying degrees, they have all been influenced by Chinese characters and by Confucianism.⁴²⁷ In an effort to dispel further criticism, the TFAM director contested that *Site of Desire* was intended as an open forum for dialogue and an opportunity to

⁴²⁴ Nanjo on Xu Bing in *Site of Desire*, 1998, p.71.

⁴²⁵ Nanjo on Wang Jun-jieh in *Site of Desire*, 1998, p.175.

⁴²⁶ Shih, 'Examination of Desire', *Artist*, 1998, p.341 (in Chinese); Liu Yung-jen, 'Merciless Desire', *Artist*, 1998, p.344 (in Chinese).

⁴²⁷ Liu Li, 'Interviewing Fumio Nanjo', *Artist*, 1998, pp.308-310 (in Chinese).

explore the effects of tradition and modernity in this region.⁴²⁸ In conjunction with this exhibition, a symposium entitled *Asian Contemporary Art: Where is it Heading?* was held in which international and local scholars, curators and artists gathered and discussed the global rise of Asian art, and themes of identity.⁴²⁹

These four 'unique cultures'⁴³⁰ were perceived not only as sharing Chinese cultural roots, but, according to the TFAM Director, Lin Mun-lee, they had also experienced what she describes as 'the onslaught of Western capitalism and culture' which was contextualised in relation to Taiwan's desire for self-determination and the homogenising effects of globalisation.⁴³¹ For example, in the catalogue's preface, Lin asks, 'Whose globalisation is this?' as she discusses how 'the currents of Western culture have dictated the pace and direction of development in modern and contemporary art' impacting on the 'idealistic and noble goals of cultural pluralism and nativism'.⁴³² That is to say, modernisation and globalisation in Asia were framed in relation to Western imperialism and capitalism. It is relevant to note, however, that six of the twelve selected Taiwan artists in *Site of Desire* had also represented Taiwan in the Venice Biennale which, one might argue, is built on a foundation of Western cultural imperialism in which nations deemed worthy are invited to participate. As Lu Pei-I (呂佩怡) remarks, the fact these artists had gained official recognition and approval from the international community in Venice suggests that this anti-Western sentiment was indicative of Taiwan's lack of national confidence and its yearning for international acceptance.⁴³³

⁴²⁸ Lin, '1998 Taipei Biennial', *Artist*, 1998, pp. 306-307 (in Chinese).

⁴²⁹ This conference was entitled *Asian Contemporary Art: Where is it Heading?*, held at the TFAM in June 1998.

⁴³⁰ *Site of Desire*, Taipei Biennial Press Release, TFAM, 1998.

⁴³¹ www.taipeibiennial.org/1998/PRESS.html (accessed 6/5/2010).

⁴³² Lin, in *Site of Desire*, 1998, p.5

⁴³³ Lin, in *Site of Desire*, 1998, p.5.

⁴³³ Lu Pei-I, 'Who Imagines to Build', *Journal of Taipei Fine Arts Museum*, 2001, p.143 (in Chinese).

It can be argued that this anti-Western hegemonic sentiment was a residual effect of Taiwan nationalism and integral to the processes of decolonisation, which, as the cultural theorist Chen Kuan-hsing (陳光興) contends, underscored this identity shift towards 'Asianisation' in Taiwan. Chen claims that Taiwan's political, economic and cultural embrace of Asia was critical to the processes of decolonisation, a means by which Taiwan could establish itself within the region, distinguish itself from China, and ultimately achieve self-determination.⁴³⁴ This goal was clearly articulated and promoted in reviews of this exhibition. For example, one foreign art critic observed that *Site of Desire* evoked a 'sense of pride in Asia's accomplishments and international importance' and 'bolstered the argument that Taiwan has concerns and traditions quite distinct from those of Mainland China'.⁴³⁵ In addition, the local critic, Hsu Wen-rei (alias Manray Hsu 徐文瑞), who subsequently co-curated the 2000 Taipei Biennial, remarked that this exhibition projected a 'new postcolonial identity of Asia'.⁴³⁶ Why it was 'new' is unclear, but Hsu's comments raise pertinent issues regarding the rise of Asia and so-called 'Asian values' which emerged as dominant tropes in international economic, political and artistic discourses in parts of East and Southeast Asia from the early 1990s.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁴ Kuan-hsing Chen, 'The Decolonizing Question', *Trajectories*, 1998, p.35. For further discussion on decolonisation see Chapter One pp. 74, 85.

⁴³⁵ Eleanor Heartney, 'The Costs of Desire', *Art in America*, vol. 86, Dec. 1998, pp.43, 38. Heartney also reports that around the time *Site of Desire* opened, President Clinton was completing his historic visit to China during which time he underlined America's opposition to Taiwan independence. Despite the US government's assurances that this was a reiteration of US policy, the Taiwan media rallied against the US accusing it of 'betrayal'.

⁴³⁶ Hsu, 'Subject of Desire', *Art Asia Pacific*, 1999, pp.26-27.

⁴³⁷ There is no single definition of the term 'Asian values' but it is based on the theory that Asian (as distinct from Western) countries share certain common cultural belief systems and practices. It was a term used most often in the early-mid 1990s and the most prominent advocates of this idea were the Malaysian Prime Minister **Mahathir Mohamad** and former Singaporean Prime Minister **Lee Kuan Yew**. The term is associated with the rise of Asia and, to some extent, anti-imperialist sentiment in parts of Asia. For more information on this concept see Surain Subramaniam, 'The Asian Values Debate: Implications for the Spread of Liberal Democracy', *Asian Affairs*, vol. 27, no. 1, Spring 2000, pp. 19-35.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/30172989.pdf?acceptTC=true> (accessed 5/3/2012). Also Kuan-hsing Chen, 'The Decolonizing Question', *Trajectories*, 1998, p.31.

Under the broad ranging curatorial theme of 'desire', this exhibition explored the interface between Asian cultural tradition and Western modernism. The impact of globalisation, modernisation, urbanisation, and consumerism was juxtaposed with themes relating to local cultural practices and spiritual traditions, which, according to Nanjo, 'live beneath the glittering life of Asian cities'.⁴³⁸ The concept of so-called 'money culture' in Asia was also a central theme explored by artists, including Wu Mali and Mei Dean-E, who were amongst the thirty-six artists represented in this exhibition.

For example, in Wu Mali's *Formosa Club* (1998) (see Chapter Five fig. 5.8), especially created for this exhibition, the artist examined Taiwan's history of prostitution, as a manifestation of desire and consumerism. While this work is discussed in detail in Chapter Five, its display and the ways it was interpreted in this exhibition context are of particular relevance here.⁴³⁹ It was essentially a three-dimensional model of one of Taiwan's ubiquitous love hotels, found also in Japan and many parts of Asia. Exploring feminist issues relating to the role of women in Taiwan's labour economy, according to Wu, it was intended to counterbalance Nanjo's comparatively optimistic view of the effects of economic development in Asia.⁴⁴⁰ Situated on the upstairs level of the TFAM, Wu's life-size love hotel comprised an interior foyer, a corridor and a façade decorated with an elegant, if slightly garish, hot pink awning, upon which a sign bearing the words 'Formosa Club' was affixed. Inside this love hotel, a row of soft, subdued red lights lit the corridor, at the end of which a Chinese golden 'money pig', symbolising prosperity and luck, was encased in a spot-lit glass case. Above this enshrined pig was a sign saying 'Trust me you can make it', which could be taken as an allusion to Taiwan's desire for economic prosperity, or as a parody on male desire.

⁴³⁸ Nanjo, in *Site of Desire*, TFAM, 1998, p.20.

⁴³⁹ See Chapter Five (p.274) for further details about this work.

⁴⁴⁰ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2009, Taipei.

Tempting as it may have been to enter into this darkly alluring space, the artist, somewhat teasingly denied the audience access into the hotel. Instead, viewers could only stand outside and look in; and read the two small framed text-panels that were positioned on either side of the door so they could not be ignored. Framed in gold and dimly lit, at first glance these two text-panels resembled the 'menus' which customarily advertise a hotel's 'special short-term' offers. However, Wu subversively substituted this information with an abridged chronology of the history of Taiwan, or as the Portuguese named it, 'Formosa'. However, this is no text-book history, but rather focuses on the history of Taiwan's sex industry. *Formosa Club* explores the ways in which women, and in this case local sex workers, contributed towards Taiwan's Economic Miracle. For Nanjo, Wu Mali's work is 'a satire on the difficult painful history and the turbulent circumstances that Taiwan has experienced under the driving force of desire.'⁴⁴¹

Suspended from the ceiling in the TFAM's foyer, Mei Dean-E's extraordinary installation, *Don't Rush, be Patient* (1998), also featured in *Site of Desire* (see Chapter Three figs. 3.11 & 3.12). This monumentally large and labour-intensive bead curtain, which depicts a modified one thousand New Taiwan Dollar banknote, was created especially for this exhibition and it is discussed in detail in Chapter Three.⁴⁴² It is relevant to point out here that the title of the work, 'Don't Rush, be Patient' (戒急用忍) is based on a phrase used by President Lee Teng-hui in 1996. In line with the government's 'southward advancing policy', which encouraged investment from Taiwan in the Asia-Pacific region, Lee proposed that local businesses should use restraint and not rush to invest in China, especially given that, in the same year, China had fired missiles towards Taiwan.⁴⁴³ 'Don't Rush, be Patient' became a popular slogan

⁴⁴¹ Nanjo on Wu Mali in *Site of Desire*, 1998, p.183.

⁴⁴² For more information on this work see Chapter Three pp.172-173.

⁴⁴³ On August 14, 1996, Lee Teng-hui announced to the National Assembly that Taiwan's economic and trade relations with China should be reviewed. On September 14 of that year,

and frequently appeared in the media. Notably, it was also employed in one of Yang Mao-lin's works created at a similar time.⁴⁴⁴ In this installation Mei alludes to the naïve and 'desperate' measures the ROC government employs to 'buy' diplomatic recognition,⁴⁴⁵ and the phrase 'Don't Rush, be Patient', which appears in the centre of this hanging, pointedly reflects upon Taiwan's pursuit for international recognition.

In relation to Taiwan's struggle for international recognition and membership within the UN, it is impossible to overlook the conceptual linkages between Mei's work and late Chinese artist, Chen Zhen's (陳箴) installation, *Round Table* (1995), which also featured in this exhibition. Chen's installation, which was originally commissioned for an exhibition commemorating the UN's fiftieth anniversary,⁴⁴⁶ comprised a large circular table around which a disparate group of wooden chairs was placed, legs elevated from the ground.⁴⁴⁷ As the curator observes, the circular table, which has become a symbol of the UN, has a dual meaning: on a universal level, it signifies a desire for 'peaceful negotiation'; on another level, it provides a setting for nations to compete, exercising their power and ambitions.⁴⁴⁸ In Taiwan's political and cultural context it was a reminder of the failure of Taiwan's successive bids seeking international recognition from the United Nations.

Lee proposed that high tech industries and other businesses wanting to invest in China should not rush and be patient, or use restraint.

⁴⁴⁴ See Chapter Four p.229.

⁴⁴⁵ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

⁴⁴⁶ This work was originally commissioned for the exhibition *Dialogues Peace Conversation* held at the United Nations European Headquarters in Geneva in 1995 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. For this exhibition (which I had the opportunity to visit) the artist added several objects, including aluminium cans of oolong tea and chocolate Buddha statues to comment on the impact of Westernisation, consumerism and the prevailing influence of traditional customs on Chinese culture.

⁴⁴⁷ Eleanor Heartney notes 'the different sizes and styles of the chairs reference the differences in culture and power that prevail in the international arena'. Heartney, 'The Costs of Desire', *Art in America*, 1998, p.42.

⁴⁴⁸ Nanjo on Chen Zhen, in *Site of Desire*, 1998, p.55.

Within the context of Taiwan's identity discourse, the Chinese artist, Cai Guo-Qiang's site-specific work, *The Golden Missile* (1998) (fig. 2.3) is particularly noteworthy as it was one of the few works in this exhibition that directly engaged with Taiwan-China relations.⁴⁴⁹ Commissioned by the TFAM for this exhibition, this temporal work comprised 200 gold-painted parachute rockets which the artist placed in a circle. This installation was unmistakably an allusion to the 1996 Chinese missile crisis.⁴⁵⁰ Given that the TFAM sits directly under the flight path for domestic aircraft, official permission was required before the artist was able to launch these rockets which, once released, transformed into parachutes that slowly drifted back to earth. Nanjo remarks that this performative work is not only a metaphor for the rise and fall of the economy in many parts of Asia, but is also a 'symbol for the conflict between Taiwan and China over sovereignty', which, he observes, 'is another manifestation of desire'.⁴⁵¹ Given his international status and his Japanese affiliations, Cai has been widely acclaimed in Taiwan, where he is distinguished from other Mainland Chinese artists.⁴⁵² As a reflection of his growing popularity, Cai has been frequently invited to Taiwan for exhibitions, including a major solo exhibition presented by the TFAM in 2009.⁴⁵³

⁴⁴⁹ This was one of two works commissioned for this exhibition. Another work Cai created was *Advertising Castle* (1998) which comprised a series of billboards which became the subject of controversy as the Taipei City Government criticised the installation describing it as a 'public endangerment', 'blatantly commercial' and was an 'eyesore'. The TFAM's Director, with the support of the artist and the local arts community, insisted the work had 'artistic value' and that the work would be temporarily dismantled if a typhoon arrived. See Linda Chang, "Ad Castle" Creates Controversy, City Councilor Calls Huge Art, *Taiwan Aujourd'hui*, 7/8/1998. <http://taiwanauji.nat.gov.tw/fp.asp?xItem=16470&ctNode=122> (accessed 23/11/2010). According to media reports and an article written by Hsu Wen-wei the city council cut the museum's annual budget by \$NT 1 million as the museum did not comply with its request to remove the work. Hsu, 'Subject of Desire', *Art Asia Pacific*, 1999, p.25.

⁴⁵⁰ On the Chinese missile crisis see Chapter One p.58.

⁴⁵¹ Nanjo, on Cai Guo-Qiang in *Site of Desire*, 1998, p.54.

⁴⁵² Given the artist was born in Fujian Province (in Quanzhou), where many Taiwanese and their ancestors originally came from, he is considered to have strong ethnic and cultural affiliations with Taiwan and shares with some Taiwanese the same dialect.

⁴⁵³ In the same year he participated in *Site of Desire*, Cai also had a solo exhibition entitled *Day Dreaming* at the EsLte Gallery (Cherng Piin), Taipei, 30 May 30–21 June 1998. He was also commissioned by the then Taiwan Province Museum of Fine Arts (now NTMFA), in Taichung, to create an explosive/ephemeral work entitled *No Destruction, No Construction: Bombing the*

Local art critiques of this exhibition suggest that domestic audiences were more interested in the curator's role and his curatorial rationale than its featured artists from China, who, until now, had rarely shown at the TFAM in a contemporary art context.⁴⁵⁴ This is perhaps unsurprising for two reasons. First, by the late 1990s, Chinese art was being embraced internationally and this, combined with the decline of Taiwan nationalism and the internationalisation of Taiwan's visual art field, created a platform for increased artistic exchange between Taiwan and China, which gained momentum in the early twenty-first century. Secondly, this exhibition marked the first time the TFAM had commissioned an independent curator to take sole responsibility for a major exhibition; as such, within Taiwan's art field, there was significant interest in the curator's role and selection of works in this exhibition.

In his discussion of the rise of the independent curator in Asia, the Philippine art critic, Patrick Flores explains how 'independent curators', as distinct from 'institutional' curators, were commonly regarded by museums in Asia as 'unknown quantities' because they worked outside the museum and therefore outside state control.⁴⁵⁵ In my experience this was to some extent true in Taiwan;⁴⁵⁶ and, until the late 1990s, independent curators were rarely offered

Taiwan Province Museum of Art that took place on 21 Aug. 1998. For information on this latter work and his solo exhibition held at the TFAM in 2009 see Chapter Eight pp. 421-422.

⁴⁵⁴ One critic reported that works by Chinese artists, including Gu Dexin and Chen Zhen, did not appear to engage in the theme of 'desire'; and another questioned the curator's emphasis on Chinese Confucianism in this exhibition. Beyond these curatorial quibbles, however, the Chinese artists' works occasioned little other comment. As such, the lack of attention given to China's presence in this exhibition signifies the opening up of Taiwan's identity discourse and of increasing Taiwan-China dialogue. Liu Li, 'Interviewing Fumio Nanjo', *Artist*, 1998, p.309 (in Chinese); Shih Rae-jen, 'Examination of Desire', *Artist*, 1998, p.341 (in Chinese).

⁴⁵⁵ Patrick D. Flores, 'Past Periphery: Curation in Southeast Asia', *Reflections on the Human Condition: Change, Conflict and Modernity*, the work of the 2004/2005 API Fellows, The Nippon Foundation, 2007, pp.9-23.

http://www.api-fellowships.org/body/international_ws_proceedings/year4.pdf (accessed 18/9/2011); and Flores, *Critical Curation/Curatorial Critique*, 2006.

⁴⁵⁶ In the late 1990s, I was curator-in-residence at the TFAM, working as an independent curator on the exhibition (*Face to Face*) which was co-organised by the TFAM. During this

the opportunity to curate an exhibition at the TFAM.⁴⁵⁷ However, with the international prominence of Asian curators, including Fumio Nanjo, along with Hou Hanru and Apinan Poshyananda from China and Thailand respectively, the TFAM, in line with international trends, began to work more with independent curators, as exemplified when the TFAM commissioned local independent curator, JJ Shih, to curate Taiwan's representation in the Venice Biennale in 1999.

Site of Desire thus marked a critical shift in the context of museological practice and in the ways Taiwan's identity was envisioned. In this exhibition Taiwan art was configured within a Northeast Asian rather than a Taiwan nationalist cultural paradigm and, by highlighting the common cultural connections between participating artists from these four countries, it effectively transcended Taiwanese essentialist identity discourses and bounded notions of national identity. Notwithstanding its regional focus, as Hsu Wen-rei observed, the aesthetic breadth and scope of this exhibition 'went beyond its intention to make a regional statement', to become international.⁴⁵⁸ As such, it marked an important shift in Taiwan's identity discourse which became increasingly internationalised, as the exhibition *Close to Open* (1999), attests.

Close to Open: Taiwan artists exposed

As discussed in Chapter One, the Venice Biennale is widely recognised as an important forum for Taiwan to attract international recognition and engage in global dialogue. In the catalogue accompanying the exhibition *Close to Open* (fig. 2.4), the TFAM Director Lin Mun-lee emphasises this fact, observing that

period there was some uncertainty amongst TFAM staff and within the wider arts community regarding my role as an independent curator. By early 2000, however, the numbers of independent curators living and/or working in Taiwan increased and they became more widely accepted.

⁴⁵⁷ As stated earlier in this chapter and in Chapter One, international incoming exhibitions were generally outsourced, and local exhibitions were curated by 'institutional' curators who were museum employees or who were strategically selected by the museum which governed the overall selection and display of art (on curatorship see Chapter One pp.70-71).

⁴⁵⁸ Hsu, 'Subject of Desire', *Art Asia Pacific*, 1999, p.27.

the Venice Biennale is 'the most important channel for Taiwanese contemporary art to communicate with the global art world'.⁴⁵⁹ This 48th Venice Biennale was significant for Taiwan as it not only marked a shift in the TFAM's museological practices, but it also signalled the rise of Chinese art on this global art stage.⁴⁶⁰ According to Harold Szeeman, the Director of that year's Biennale, 'the moment's right to show a bit more about what's going on in China, and to show it on the same level as artists in the West'.⁴⁶¹ This biennale, often referred to as the 'China Biennale', is widely believed to have contributed to the increasing popularity of Chinese contemporary art in the West. Although the participation of Chinese artists began in 1993 in Venice, John Clark notes that 1999 marked a 'radical change in the nature and scale of Chinese participation'.⁴⁶² The increased attention attracted by China in this biennale presented a significant challenge for the TFAM, whose responsibility was to ensure that Taiwan art remained visible on this highly competitive global art stage. As mentioned in Chapter One, in 1999 Taiwan was forced to relinquish its *national* status following protests from the Chinese government and was demoted to 'the Exhibition of the Taipei Fine-Arts Museum of Taiwan'.⁴⁶³ Furthermore, in contrast to previous exhibitions in which the word

⁴⁵⁹ Lin Mun-lee, 'Towards an Openness', in *Close to Open: Taiwan Artists Exposed*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum Taipei, 1999, p.5.

⁴⁶⁰ In this 48th Venice Biennale, the Director of the Venice Biennale, Harold Szeeman combined the international and Aperto sections, the latter of which is usually reserved for emerging artists. A total of nineteen Chinese artists' were selected and their works were shown in the Italian pavilion in the Giardini and in the Arsenale where Cai Guo-Qiang's installation was displayed. The participating Chinese artists included Chinese artists Ai Weiwei, Zhou Tiehai, Zhuang Hui, Wang Xingwei, Yang Shaobin, Fang Lijun, Qiu Shihua, Xie Nanxing, Zhang Peili, Yue Minjun, Zhao Bandi, Wang Jin, Zhang Huàn, Liang Shaoji, Ma Liuming, Lu Hao, Chen Zhen, Cai Guo-Qiang and Wang Du.

⁴⁶¹ Robert Storr, 'Prince of Tides – Robert Storr in Conversation with Harold Szeeman', *Art Forum*, vol. 37, issue, 9, May 1999, pp.160-165.

⁴⁶² <http://search.proquest.com/docview/214347007?accountid=8330> (accessed 24/11/2010).

⁴⁶³ John Clark, 'Taiwan in Venice', in *Taiwan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale*, 2010, p.117. Clark notes that in 1995, when Cai Guo-Qiang's work was represented alongside other Asian artists' works in *Transculture* (curated by Fumio Nanjo), Chinese art reached 'a more internationalized level'. He states, however, that 1999 marked the most important turning point. It is relevant to note that a significant number of artists' works in this biennale were from the Swiss businessman and former Ambassador to China, Uli Sigg's own collection.

⁴⁶³ Chapter One p.88.

'Taiwan' was given prominence, here it was erased from the exhibition title and publicity documentation.⁴⁶⁴

Taiwan's participation in the Venice Biennale has generally been viewed in a positive light by international audiences as demonstrated by the high number of artists who have since been invited to show in exhibitions overseas.⁴⁶⁵ Prior to staging this biennale in 1999, however, a debate developed centring on how best to represent artists' works from Taiwan in such a challenging international environment. Both local and foreign curators, participants, and commentators questioned the TFAM's processes of selection, remarked on the excessively large number of artists represented, and criticised the overcrowded displays and the lack of a coherent conceptual exhibition framework.⁴⁶⁶ In the previous two exhibitions, each of which had included five artists, the TFAM adopted an open and what was considered by the museum to be a 'democratic' solicitation process. Artists were invited to submit proposals and, from these, a panel of judges selected a 'representative' range of work.⁴⁶⁷ Artists from different generations were customarily included, and the

⁴⁶⁴ For further information on the Taiwan government's attempts to establish a permanent national pavilion and China's objections to its national representation see Chen and Hu, 'Venice Biennale', in *Taiwan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale*, 2010, pp.30-35.

⁴⁶⁵ This includes artists Michael Lin, Chen Chieh-jen, and Yao Jui-chung and the international opportunities they have been given since exhibiting in Venice is further discussed in this thesis.

⁴⁶⁶ In their article, Sean Chen and Tsai Wen-ting outline some of these comments. According to this report Huang Hai-ming, the juror of the 1997 Venice Biennale and essayist in the 1999 Biennale, remarked there should be fewer artists, a comment which was supported by another juror, artist Hsiao Chin, who remarked the displays were cramped. Beatrice Hsieh Pei-ni (current Director of the KMFA) commented that the selection should be based on individual artworks rather than on the artist. The French curator Cecile Bourne observed that while the 'group approach' demonstrates Taiwan's cultural diversity there is no 'point of commonality' between the 'strong individual characters of the works'. See Sean Chen and Tsai Wen-ting, 'Taiwanese Artists Make Waves in Venice', *Taiwan Panorama* 10 Oct. 1997, p.114. http://www.sino.gov.tw/en/show_issue.php?search=1&id=1997108610114E.TXT&cur_page=1&table=2&keyword=fumio%20nanjo&type=1&height=1&scope=&order=0&1stPage=1&num=10 (accessed 24/11/2010). Also see Yao Jui-chung's 1997 report: Yao J., 從「貧窮」撤退—第四十七屆威尼斯雙年展 ('Retreat from Poverty - the 47th Venice Biennale'), *現代美術 (Modern Art)*, no. 73, Aug. 1997, pp.2-18 (in Chinese).

⁴⁶⁷ Huang Sun-quan, 'Art and Exhibitions Under Globalisation: Historical Documents and Recollections of the Taiwan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale', in *Taiwan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale*, 2010, p.91.

conceptual/aesthetic diversity of works presented was also considered important by TFAM, which sought to promote fairness and dispel criticisms of the museum.⁴⁶⁸ However, several critics observed that, with a large number and diverse range of works, the integrity of individual artists' works was compromised, and there were too many 'conflicting fields of vision', which presented a fractured rather than cohesive or coherent image of Taiwan art.⁴⁶⁹

Seeking to improve and refine its exhibition strategy, the TFAM revised its curatorial structure. Most significantly, the judging committee model, which conventionally comprised at least one foreigner (usually Western), was cast aside and the aforementioned local independent curator JJ Shih was charged with overarching curatorial responsibility. Appointed through the museum's open-application process,⁴⁷⁰ Shih had previously curated *River: New Asian Art* (1997) and *New Voice: Contemporary Art Dialogue among Taipei, Hong Kong and Shanghai* (1998); and he had also been Head of Exhibitions at the TFAM (1989-1992). While Shih was clearly guided, at least conceptually, by the museum in the development of this exhibition,⁴⁷¹ the fact that the TFAM

⁴⁶⁸ As Huang Sun-quan notes while age and aesthetic diversity were judged as important, gender was not. Until 2010, there has only been one female curator and out of thirty-one participating artists, only five have been female. Huang Sun-quan in *Taiwan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, 2010*, pp.90-93. For a more detailed discussion on the selection process for the Venice Biennale see Chen and Hu, in *Taiwan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, 2010*, pp.36-41.

⁴⁶⁹ Schöeber, in *Re-Writing Culture in Taiwan*, 2009, p.171; Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, 'Constructive Ambiguities: Taiwan and the Venice Biennale 1995-2009', in *Taiwan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, 2010*, pp.106.

⁴⁷⁰ For more information on the curatorial applications, the judging process, and the selection see Xu Ge-lin, '第48屆威尼斯雙年展策展人甄選側記' ('Comments about Selecting the Curator of the 48th Venice Biennale'), 現代美術 (*Modern Art*), no. 83, 1999, pp.3-26 (in Chinese); Lu Pei-I, 'Who Imagines to Build', *Journal of Taipei Fine Arts Museum*, 2001, pp. 125-151 (in Chinese).

⁴⁷¹ Xu Ge-lin notes that while JJ Shih's proposal was accepted, the selection committee (comprising Lu Ching-fu, Lee Chang-jun, Hsieh Po-shia, Jean Hubert Martin, Director of the Museum of Africa and Oceania in France and Brett Rogers, Director of the exhibition department of foreign and cultural affairs in the UK office) suggested he might incorporate some aspect of Huang Hai-ming's proposal into his own (which Shih stated was not strategically or technically possible); and that his selection of artists should be in line with the exhibition theme. See Xu, 'Comments about Selecting the Curator', *Modern Art*, 1999, pp.3-4 (in Chinese). In the catalogue, the TFAM Director remarks that '(the curator) chose works from

appointed a local independent curator signified an important paradigmatic shift in museological practice in Taiwan, which, as indicated, was mirrored in other countries in Asia.

The Venice Biennale conventionally revolves around participating countries promoting their idiosyncratic national cultures, and questions concerning how best to visually re-present 'the nation' inevitably arise in a forum based on national representation. Discussing Taiwan's representation at the Venice Biennale, Lu Pei-I (呂佩怡) points out that this strategy to promote 'Taiwanese characteristics' appeals to a Western fascination with cultural difference, and ensures that international audiences will not 'forget' Taiwan.⁴⁷² The artist Yuan Goang-ming (袁廣鳴), who represented Taiwan in the 2003 Venice Biennale, reflects upon this issue of national representation:

We respond to issues of globalism, and our development [as artists] depends on our responses. If our discourse is overly local, foreigners may not be able to understand it and may not be interested. But if we respond via fashionable curatorial issues, that discourse may be buried in the crowd.⁴⁷³

Responding to discussions concerning the representation of Taiwan art at the Venice Biennale, Fumio Nanjo expressed the view that, 'if Taiwan wants to build its own special character, two important factors are knowledge of the themes of freedom and democracy, and an understanding of the affairs of the nation.'⁴⁷⁴ That is to say, according to Nanjo, to attract international recognition in this major art event, it is necessary to demonstrate Taiwan's democratic values, and to convey a sense of national identity consciousness. The correlation made here between democracy and the nation is particularly pertinent to Taiwan's identity discourse and to the visual representation of Taiwan art. Taiwan's democratic values and its culturally pluralistic identity

three artists' but who selected those artists is unclear. Lin, 'Towards an Openness', in *Close to Open*, p.5.

⁴⁷² Lu Pei-I, 'Who Imagines to Build', *Journal of Taipei Fine Arts Museum*, 2001, pp. 125-151 (in Chinese).

⁴⁷³ Yuan Goang-ming cited in Huang, in *Taiwan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale*, 2010, p.92.

⁴⁷⁴ Chen and Tsai, 'Taiwanese Artists Make Waves', *Taiwan Panorama*, 1997.

were increasingly highlighted and celebrated in international exhibitions of Taiwan art as a means by which Taiwan could distinguish itself from Communist China and its culturally repressive systems of indoctrination and censorship.

Close to Open featured three artists, Hwang Buh-ching (黃步青), Chen Chieh-jen (陳界仁) and Hung Tung-lu (洪東祿), whose works responded to the curatorial theme of the body or, more specifically, to 'the aesthetics of the body'. According to the curator, the body and its visual representation has traditionally been concealed or repressed in Eastern cultures, and 'treated by Taiwanese artists as taboo'.⁴⁷⁵ In more recent times, however, the 'Taiwanese self-enclosed mind', which Shih describes in terms of the effects of foreign colonisation and political authoritarianism, has been liberated and become more 'open', which he attributes to the lifting of martial law and the rise of democratisation. Since this time, the body, he claims, has become a 'conspicuous' subject in Taiwan art as an 'expressive sign [of] individual existence'.⁴⁷⁶ This idea has also been discussed by the socio-political commentator known as Nan Fangshuo (南方朔), who points out that the body signifies the emergence of the individual, and the collapse of the 'old value system' based on the national collective.⁴⁷⁷ Shih and Nan view the body as a signifier of individuality and autonomy, locating it in a political context of democratisation and freedom of expression, and this view was underscored in this exhibition.

In the exhibition the relationship between the past, present and future was visually articulated through works by the three artists, spanning different generations, and explored themes relating to the land, tradition, memory,

⁴⁷⁵ JJ Shih, 'Close to Open: Taiwan Artists Exposed', in *Close to Open*, TFAM, 1999, pp.8-9.

⁴⁷⁶ Shih, in *Close to Open*, 1999, pp.8-9.

⁴⁷⁷ Nan Fangshuo is the pen name for Wang Hsing-ching (王杏慶). Nan Fangshuo is written without a hyphen. Nan Fangshuo cited in Lu Pei-l, 'Who Imagines to Build', *Journal of Taipei Fine Arts Museum*, 2001, p.144 (in Chinese).

history, as well as contemporary popular culture and technology. While acknowledging their different ages and their divergent conceptual and aesthetic concerns, Shih remarks that the three participating artists, Hwang Buh-ching, Chen Chieh-jen and Hung Tung-lu share an interest in the body 'as an artistic language'.⁴⁷⁸ In Hwang Buh-ching's installation, *Feast of the Wild* (1994) (fig. 2.5), this bodily awareness was expressed rather more obliquely through the relationship between form, space and viewer. This mixed media work, a version of which was shown in the Taipei Biennial *Quest for Identity* (1996), comprised two floor-to-ceiling wall-based portraits based on traditional Buddhist spiritual practitioners; and a human-scale tree. These figurative forms were fashioned from seeds, dry grasses and other organic matter which gave the work a raw, textual quality and invoked a sense of ephemerality. Situated in front of these images were several small circular tables upon which were numerous small plates offering different traditional Chinese herbal medicines.

Hwang, who was born in 1948, and trained in France, was the most senior artist represented; his works traverse the local and global. As the curator notes, this artist had experienced the transformation of Taiwan from a 'conservative, inhibited and dull [society into a] liberal, open and vibrant' capitalist country,⁴⁷⁹ thus reinforcing the overall curatorial narrative emphasising the 'opening up' and democratisation of Taiwan. According to Shih, these works reflect a certain national consciousness, described in terms of this artist's 'nostalgia' for the land.⁴⁸⁰ Drawing from traditional Chinese remedies and Buddhist iconology, I would argue that this work engenders a certain 'Asian' exoticism, and in his catalogue essay Shih refers to the 'naturalism of Eastern aesthetics'.⁴⁸¹ However, Shih contends that, within the 'ritual space' this artist has created, foreign viewers could simultaneously

⁴⁷⁸ Shih, in *Close to Open*, 1999, p.9.

⁴⁷⁹ Shih, in *Close to Open*, 1999, p.9.

⁴⁸⁰ Shih, in *Close to Open*, 1999, p.10.

⁴⁸¹ Shih, in *Close to Open*, 1999, pp.10-11.

experience and transcend an 'other's culture', thus suggesting the work is not only 'Asian' but also transnational.⁴⁸²

Chen Chieh-jen's monumentally large black and white digital photographs, five of which were exhibited, also engage with local and global themes (fig. 2.6). Several works from this series, collectively titled *Revolt in the Soul & Body*, were also included in *Site of Desire* where they were interpreted in relation to the gaze and the 'violence' of desire.⁴⁸³ In *Close to Open*, Chen's works were conceptualised in relation to the body, and specifically the interconnection between mind, body, and spirit, as well as more broadly in relation to human nature and the so-called 'moral order'.⁴⁸⁴ Drawing upon China's history of foreign imperialism and political struggle, and Taoist notions of purgatory, suffering, and redemption, these five computer-generated images explore concepts of power, authority and control. According to Shih, Chen's work in this exhibition is believed to represent 'radical liberation in language and thinking in Taiwanese contemporary art'.⁴⁸⁵

In the context of the exhibition space, formerly a prison, these confronting images of tortured, deformed and decapitated bodies resonated powerfully and left a strong impression on international audiences. Chen Chieh-jen, who was born in 1960, has been described as an 'outsider' preferring to remain on the margins of the art mainstream;⁴⁸⁶ however, after this exhibition, he gained considerable international acclaim and his work has featured in major international exhibitions.⁴⁸⁷ Several of Chen's works, including *Image of*

⁴⁸² Shih, in *Close to Open*, 1999, pp.10-11.

⁴⁸³ Chang Fang-wei on Chen Chieh-jen in *Site of Desire*, 1998, p.147.

⁴⁸⁴ Shih, in *Close to Open*, 1998, p.12.

⁴⁸⁵ Shih, in *Close to Open*, 1998, pp.11-12.

⁴⁸⁶ Shih, in *Close to Open*, 1998, p.11. For more on Chen see Susana Sanz Gimenez, 'Chen Chieh-jen's Artwork and Post-1987 Art in Taiwan: From the Body as Political Instrument to the Recuperation of Self', *Oriental Archive*, no.78, 2010, pp.341-357.

⁴⁸⁷ In 2005 Chen was one of forty-one artists participating in the exhibition, *The Experience of Art in Venice*; and he represented Taiwan again in the 2009 Venice Biennale (he is one of the very few artists from Taiwan whose work has been shown twice at Venice). He has also participated in the Sao Paulo Biennale (1998), the Lyon Biennale (2000), *Translated Acts*:

Identical Twins presented in Venice, have been shown in Australia and New Zealand in the exhibition I curated, *Face to Face: Contemporary Art from Taiwan* (1999). Amongst the eight artists represented in *Face to Face*, Chen's works in particular challenged audiences' preconceptions of Taiwan art. His images of tortured and disembodied human figures are certainly visually confronting and raise thorny questions concerning the meaning of 'truth' and the relationship between power and history.

In this exhibition, Hung Tung-lu, who was born in 1968, was the youngest of the three artists represented. Working predominantly in new media and in a 'gaudy' postmodernist fashion, Hung's 'light and serious' works are viewed by the curator as representative of the Generation X.⁴⁸⁸ In his six Duratran digital prints and light boxes in this exhibition, Hung appropriates and manipulates prototypical images of youth culture from American Barbie dolls to Japanese anime figurines (fig. 2.7). These images are superimposed against classical religious Italian frescos, or against well-known tourist sites including China's Great Wall. By portraying such contemporary, religious and historic symbols, Hung seeks to 'protest against the totems of art and religion', to 'subvert the patriarchal society',⁴⁸⁹ and questions notions of reality and authenticity. In the context of this Venice Biennale, Hung's works were seen to express Taiwan's pluralistic and hybrid culture. According to the curator, his works are 'emblematic' of the 'crisis of identity', which, he claims, was reflected in many young artists' works in Taiwan and can be attributed to the rise of globalisation, increasing mobilisation, and the collapse of national borders.⁴⁹⁰

Performance and Body Art from East Asia 1990 to 2001 at the Queens Museum of Art in New York (2001), Fukuoka Triennale (2005), the Sydney Biennale (2006), the Liverpool Biennial (2006), the Istanbul Biennale (2007), the Guangzhou Biennale (2008) and the Asia Pacific Triennial (2009); and his works have also featured in the 2002 and 2004 Taipei Biennials.

⁴⁸⁸ Shih, in *Close to Open*, 1999, pp.13-14. The term 'Generation X' is discussed further in Chapter Six, pp.283-285.

⁴⁸⁹ Hung Tung-lu, 'Hyper Reality in Virtual Image', in *Close to Open*, 1999, p.60.

⁴⁹⁰ Shih, in *Close to Open*, 1999, pp.13-14.

While the curatorial theme centred on the body and notions of individualism, it is my contention that *Close to Open* was underscored by a political sub-text. This exhibition sought to *locate* Taiwan in an international context and also to differentiate Taiwan from China. The title 'Close to Open' was, I argue, designed to draw attention to Taiwan's transformation from a one party authoritarian state to a democratised and culturally pluralistic society. In doing so, it was not only appealing to Western democratic values, but it was also implicitly making a clear ideological distinction between Taiwan's open, cosmopolitan and outward-looking society, and China's inward-looking and censorious political regime (as it has been and is still perceived by some). Since the late 1990s, this ideological distinction has increasingly and explicitly been emphasised by Taiwan's political leaders, and particularly by the current KMT leader, Ma Ying-jeou, who frequently appropriates George W. Bush's description of Taiwan as a 'beacon of democracy' in Asia.⁴⁹¹

Close to Open visually articulated Taiwan's democratic political values and culturally pluralistic characteristics through the artworks, as well as in the exhibition catalogue essays. In the preface, Taiwan's embrace of democracy was underlined by the TFAM Director, Lin Mun-lee, who argues that the exhibition reveals how 'Taiwanese contemporary artists of different generations all endeavour to get rid of the close-mindedness.'⁴⁹² Moreover, rather than highlighting the national collective, as previous exhibitions had

⁴⁹¹ When Ma Ying-jeou became President in March 2008 the then US President, George W. Bush, sent a congratulatory telegram which reportedly referred to Taiwan as 'a beacon of democracy to Asia and the world.' Since this time the term has become widely used in political discourse and in the media in Taiwan. See President Ma Ying-jeou's Inaugural Address, Mar. 2008. <http://tecchcm.org.vn/en/data/president-ma.pdf> (accessed 12/9/2011); Shih Hsiuchuan, 'Ma's Re-inauguration: US Congressional Delegation Arrives for Ma Inauguration', *Taipei Times*, 21 May 2012.

<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2012/05/21/2003533358> (accessed 12/9/2012); Mimi Lee, 'In Taiwan, Mainland See Beacon of Democracy', *Epoch Times*, New York, 14 Aug. 2011. <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/china-news/in-taiwan-mainland-chinese-see-beacon-of-democracy-60364.html> (accessed 12/9/2011).

⁴⁹² Lin does not elaborate on this remark, but in the context of this exhibition and the accompanying essays, it can be assumed she is referring to Taiwan's history of colonial rule and political authoritarianism, and also to the nativist movement which by the late 1990s, as discussed, was associated in the art community with narrow-minded provincialism.

sought to do, Lin focuses instead on the role of the individual and the concept of 'self-transcendence'.⁴⁹³ For the curator, these artists' works reveal the 'pluralism of Taiwan contemporary art'; and the 'total opening' of Taiwan.⁴⁹⁴

In this chapter I have examined how identity issues and the museological representation of Taiwan art became increasingly open to and influenced by Asian regional and wider international trends. By the late 1990s, the fear of economic and cultural marginalisation effectively overshadowed debates about Taiwan's national identity status, which had become mired in political factionalism, and ethnic separatism. In the visual art field the desire to be visible and internationally competitive on the global art stage intensified. With the upsurge of interest in Asian art internationally, the TFAM endeavoured to re-situate Taiwan art in an Asian and international context. This ambition was demonstrated in the new curatorial strategy the TFAM adopted in both the Taipei and Venice biennales, which involved two prominent independent curators from Japan and Taiwan whose exhibitions helped to re-align Taiwan's interests with regional and global cultural trends. I have argued that *Site of Desire* signified an important strategic step towards the opening up of Taiwan's identity discourse to include diverse cultural and artistic perspectives. Bringing together the work of Northeast Asian contemporary artists in one place, this exhibition fostered a new sense of Asian regionalism and attracted significant international attention.

Close to Open set out to promote Taiwan's differences and to demonstrate to the international community that Taiwan had become an open, democratic, capitalist and culturally progressive society that was globally-connected and part of Asia. While focusing on universal themes relating to the body, Taiwan's differences were also articulated through the curatorial selection of works which engaged with notions of Eastern tradition and spirituality, history, as

⁴⁹³ Lin, in *Close to Open*, 1999, p.5.

⁴⁹⁴ Shih, in *Close to Open*, 1999, p.14.

well as the impact of contemporary American and Japanese popular culture on Taiwan art. *Close to Open* highlighted the plurality of identities and perspectives in Taiwan art, and, simultaneously expressed a certain “Asian exoticism”, and the exhibition was clearly designed to appeal to international audiences. The exhibition marked a critical breakthrough in museological and curatorial practice in Taiwan. As Director Lin remarks, the exhibition responded to the ‘spirit of opening’, which that year’s Venice Biennale promoted.⁴⁹⁵ As these exhibitions attest, by the early twenty-first century, the concept of a distinctive ‘Taiwan nation’, as a fixed and bounded cultural entity, diminished in importance. Identity narratives increasingly revolved around globalisation, transnationalism, and the rise of China, which are further discussed in Chapters Seven and Eight. In the following four chapters individual artists’ responses to this changing identity discourse are explored as case study narratives.



Figure 2.3 Cai Guoqiang's *Golden Thread* (1999) at the National Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall, Taipei

⁴⁹⁵ Lin, in *Close to Open*, 1999, p.5.



Figures 2.1 & 2.2 (left to right): 1998 Taipei Biennial: *Site of Desire* exhibition catalogue; Wang Jun-jieh, *HB-1750*, 1998, mixed media installation (in *Site of Desire*)



Figure 2.3: Cai Guo-Qiang, *Golden Missile*, 1998, mixed media performance (Image courtesy of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum)



Figure 2.4: *Close to Open* exhibition catalogue



Figure 2.5: Hwang Buh-ching, *Feast of the Wild*, 1994 (Venice Biennale, 1999), mixed media installation (Image courtesy of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum)



Figure 2.6: Chen Chieh-jen, images from *Revolt in the Soul & Body* (1990-1999), computer generated photographs (Venice Biennale, 1999), (Image courtesy of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum)

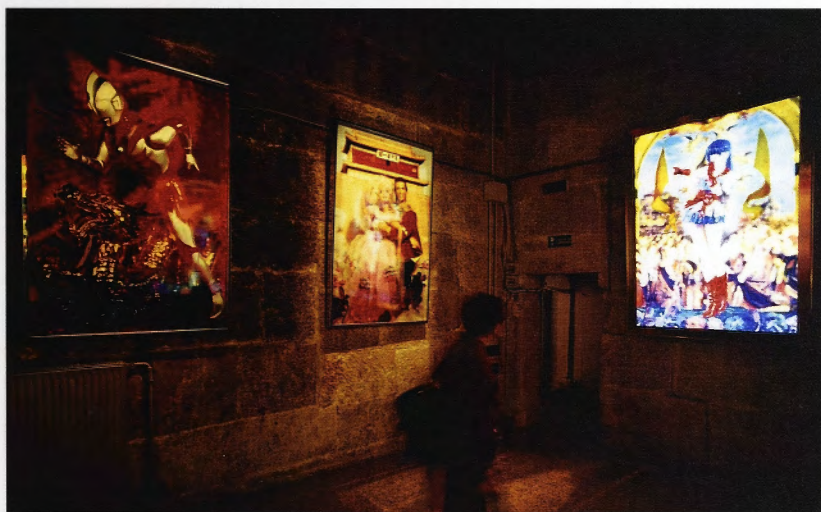


Figure 2.7: Hung Tung-lu (left to right); *Dragon is Coming*; *First Gate of the Great Wall*; Lynn Minmay, 1999, (Venice Biennale, 1999), Duratrans print and lightbox (Image courtesy of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum)



Figure 2.6: Chen Chieh-ping (right) and Chen Chieh-ping (left) in the field. The image is a computer-generated image of the two people in the field. The image is a computer-generated image of the two people in the field.



Figure 2.7: Chen Chieh-ping (right) and Chen Chieh-ping (left) in the field. The image is a computer-generated image of the two people in the field. The image is a computer-generated image of the two people in the field.

PART II

ARTIST CASE STUDIES

Mei Dean-E

Yang Mao-lin

Wu Mali

Yao Jui-chung

¹ Mei Dean-E, "The Question of the Question," in *Questioning the Question: The Question of the Question*, ed. Yang Mao-lin, (Taipei: National Sun Yat-sen University Press, 1994), 1-12.

² This is the traditional meaning of the word "question" in Chinese. The word "question" in English is a more recent borrowing from the English word "question."

PART II

ARTIST CASE STUDIES

Wei Guan

Yang Min-ho

Wu Mei

Yao Jui-chang

CHAPTER THREE

Questioning the Politics of Identity - MEI DEAN-E

Taiwan's identity is founded upon a grey soil of an exilic regime, which [is] still not recognized by the world [...] there is a strong feeling of impotence within this frustrated [lack of] recognition [...] It is precisely because of this unique cultural environment that [makes me] become concerned about the state of Taiwan's art. [It gives me] the impulse to investigate and verify all her contradictory personalities [and] drives me to read across the whole cultural environment in order to seek artistic inspiration (sic).⁴⁹⁶

Taiwan's quest for identity and international recognition has been a key source of inspiration for artist Mei Dean-E (梅丁衍)⁴⁹⁷ (b.1954) as embodied in his statement above. During the 1990s, in particular, Mei created several major works that explicitly and critically engaged in geopolitical issues concerning Taiwan's identity, history, its relations with China and Japan. Discussed in Chapters One and Two these issues are re-examined here within the context of Mei's art practice, which typically combines visual symbols, metaphor, irony, and word-play to explore the politics and politicisation of identity in Taiwan. Drawing on selected artworks, along with interviews I conducted with the artist over more than a decade, this research investigates Mei's role, as artist, critic and writer, in this identity discourse. It demonstrates the significant artistic and intellectual contribution he made to this discourse, a subject that deserves greater scholarly attention.

Mei Dean-E belongs to the same generation as artists Yang Mao-lin and Wu Mali (see Chapters Four and Five). However, he does not use his art to endorse or oppose a particular political ideology or cause as these artists did during the mid-late 1980s and 1990s. It is the contention of this chapter that Mei's interest in national identity issues has been primarily intellectual and is not politically or emotionally driven. Having said that, there is a personal

⁴⁹⁶ Mei Dean-E, 'Artist's Statement', in *Displacement: Mei Dean-E Solo Exhibition*, Contemporary Art Foundation Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, 2003, p.52.

⁴⁹⁷ This is Mei's preferred spelling of his name given by his father and is derived from a Shanghai dialect. He is also known as Mei Ding-yen, Dean-E Mei and Mei Deane.

dimension to Mei's interest in identity issues that is deep and enduring and it stems from his background as a *waishengren* (Mainlander). During the 1990s, especially, several of his works explored notions of identity and belonging in relation to China and Chinese cultural tradition. Essentially, Mei perceives identity as a site of philosophical enquiry, and the nation as a political construct. As such, his views are in accord with Benedict Anderson's theories on national identity, which are further explored in this chapter.

This view of national identity is visually articulated in several of Mei's key works examined in this chapter, which call attention to and undermine the political systems and strategies, and the nationalist rhetoric underpinning Taiwan's identity discourse. These works include *This is Taiwan* (1991), *2.28/History Blind* (1992), *Silk Road Broche China* (1993), *Ai Dun Di Ti* (1994), *Three Principles Reunite China* (1993), *Don't Rush, be Patient* (1998), and *Taiwan Loves Japan/Japan Loves Taiwan* (1998). While this chapter focuses predominantly on his visual assemblages created during the 1990s, it also examines some of the artist's earlier and later mixed media and digital works created in the 1980s and post-2000, which help to contextualise the artists' work and his trajectory. During the 1990s Mei was one of the few artists who engaged, as a writer, in critical debates about Taiwan's identity in the art field, and articles he wrote about *bentu yishi* (Taiwan consciousness) in art are also examined here.

Although Mei's works have been widely exhibited in Taiwan and overseas, there has been no in-depth or sustained critical analysis undertaken on this artist and his role and contribution to this identity discourse. Arguably, the fact he was a *waishengren* (Mainlander), and a Western-trained installation artist, who was not a Taiwanese nationalist, marginalised him to some extent in Taiwan's localised art field. This research draws on extant articles and reviews on Mei's work published in art catalogues, journals and magazines (in Chinese and English), but it relies chiefly on primary materials, including interviews I

have conducted with Mei over the past fifteen years. Mei's idiosyncratic and incisive critiques highlight the inherent paradoxes, and offer a valuable insight into the politics of identity and representation. By the turn of the century, Mei was of the few artists still examining identity issues, but as this chapter demonstrates, his attention moved away from the nation-state to focus on the individual and notions of history and memory.

The formative years – politics and art

When Mei was at art school in Taiwan in the mid-1970s⁴⁹⁸ he began to explore the relationship between political ideology and identity formation, and the ways governments employ language and symbols to engender national consciousness, social cohesion and conformity. This is manifest in several of his early works, including *No 2 Construction* (1979) (fig. 3.1), which depicts, on the far right of the picture-plane, the naked right arm of a man whose face and body are concealed by the frame. Painted in the super-realist style popular in Taiwan during the 1970s, Mei explores the ways identity is measured and defined not by the individual, but by official standards, social attitudes and values. This is metaphorically represented by a number tattooed on the anonymous subject's slender arm, and a yardstick emerging from the top left hand side of the frame similar to those used in photographs of prisoners, or colonial, ethnographic portraits of aboriginal people. It is relevant to note that this painting was created immediately after Mei completed his two year mandatory military service during which time he was put into detention for two months for suspected subversive activities.⁴⁹⁹ Visually, this work alludes

⁴⁹⁸ Mei enrolled in the Department of Fine Arts, Chinese Culture University in 1974 and graduated in 1977, the same year he began his mandatory military service. The Chinese Culture University (which Yang Mao-lin also attended) was one of the very few academic institutions in the 1970s that offered courses in fine arts and it focused mainly on Chinese *guohua* ink painting promoted by the KMT as 'national painting'.

⁴⁹⁹ Mei says he took a 'secret' document from his own file as a souvenir of his time in the military. However, he was discovered by military officers who did not believe he had taken it for personal reasons and Mei was put into detention for two months just as he was about to return home. Mei Dean-E, Email to the Author, 16 July 2012.

to this incident that has left a deep impression on the artist who feels aggrieved at the ways he was misjudged and victimised.⁵⁰⁰

Political symbols, such as flags, maps, slogans and political portraits have featured prominently in Mei's art practice, and *National Flag* (1980) was one of the first works in which he used such iconography. This painting depicts the ROC national flag, represented in meticulous detail, neatly folded and pinned at each edge. During an interview I conducted with the artist in 1995, Mei recalled how, under martial law, political symbols and slogans promoting the ROC government and deriding the Chinese Communists were ubiquitous; and how he was taught at school to recite these anti-Communist political slogans and paint the portrait of the Father of the ROC, Dr. Sun Yat-sen (b. 1866-1925).⁵⁰¹

In an interview with the late art critic and academic, Elsa Chen Hsiang-chun (陳香君), he remarks 'you could say I grew up in an environment of authoritarian rule and political cults. If I use the images of leading political figures today, that's the natural thing for me to do'. He adds, however, that some people 'do not accept this' as they regard his art overly political and his attitude 'too radical'.⁵⁰² While Mei acknowledges he is politically-engaged, he claims he is not a 'political artist', an important distinction. In contrast to artists such as Yang Mao-lin and Wu Mali, Mei does not use his work to advocate political reform, nor does he seek to raise political consciousness; rather he strives to question, critique, and subvert the political rhetoric and semiotics, or signs and symbols used in mainstream politics and media.

⁵⁰⁰ This incident is also discussed in Hu Yung-fen, 掙脫身份與認同的宿命——梅丁衍的創作歷程 ('Breaking Away from the Destiny of Identity and Identification – the Creative Process of Mei Dean-E') 典藏藝術 (*Art & Collection*), 1995, p.164 (in Chinese).

⁵⁰¹ Mei Dean-E, Interview with Author, 1995, Taipei. Sun Yat-sen was President of ROC from 1911-1912; and was Premier of the KMT (of China) from 1919-1925.

⁵⁰² Mei Dean-E, Interview with Author, 2007, Taipei; and Chen Hsiang-chun, 'Interview with Mei Dean-E', in *Displacement: Mei Dean-E Solo Exhibition*, MOCA, Taipei, 2003, p.24.

Focusing on Mei's appropriation of political iconography, the former TFAM curator, Lee Yulin (李玉玲), remarks that Mei's works risk becoming 'political illustration', a criticism that has been levelled at the artist by others and which Mei naturally rejects.⁵⁰³ It is my contention Mei's work extends well beyond mere illustration and political commentary as he manipulates, distorts, and satirizes political icons and rhetoric, using humour and irony - not unlike some Chinese Political Pop artists, whose works draw from Maoist iconology. In my interview the artist more circumspectly remarks,

I use these symbols and cultural values in an ironic way - to mock our country's situation. People are members of our country but their ideas are governed by political policy. [In my work] I want to question who is the nation and who are the people.⁵⁰⁴

As his early works attest, Mei seeks to question and challenge the prevailing orthodoxy and, during these formative years, he developed an interest in the less conventional and more subversive ideas and practices of Dadaism, which for him signified 'freedom' and 'rebellion'.⁵⁰⁵

Everything was under government control and there was nothing to express politically, or to rebel against. I used to go to the library to look at the [Western] magazines and... [I found] that Dadaism was close to Eastern ideas...because it is irrational, like Zen Buddhism [while] the West is logical.⁵⁰⁶

The fact that Dadaism originated in Europe is immaterial to the artist, who, during this time, searched for a more open and direct means of self-expression. Mei states that, during martial law, the government censored radical forms of behaviour and discouraged analytical thinking, and this engendered in him 'a satirical, nihilistic view on life'.⁵⁰⁷ He reflects, 'I think my attitude of "satire" comes from the inconstancy of "truth" in life [and]...criticism...evokes the

⁵⁰³ Yulin Lee (Lee Yulin), 'Taiwan: A Location of Construction and Synthesis, in *Art and Social Change*, Pandanus Books, Canberra, 2005, pp.362-363. A few curators and critics in Taiwan with whom I have spoken have also remarked upon the illustrative aspects of Mei's work and questioned if it is art or political commentary.

⁵⁰⁴ Mei Dean-E, Interview with Author, 2007, Taipei.

⁵⁰⁵ Mei Dean-E, Interview with Author, 2007, Taipei.

⁵⁰⁶ Mei Dean-E, Interview with Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁵⁰⁷ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 1998, Taipei.

irrational [and it has been] an important motivation and inspiration in my art creation.'⁵⁰⁸

Seeking to expand his artistic horizons, in 1983, Mei left Taiwan to study overseas. During the 1980s many artists from Taiwan, who could afford to do so, went abroad, and mostly to Europe. Mei, on the other hand, enrolled in a Masters degree at the Pratt Institute (1983-85) in New York. Here, he met several Chinese artists, including the now internationally renowned Chinese artist and political activist, Ai Weiwei (艾未未) (b. 1957),⁵⁰⁹ who was then experimenting with performance art, photography, and making readymade objects.⁵¹⁰ Although these two artists were not close, they shared a strong interest in politics, Dadaism, and in the idea of the 'original' in art; when comparing these artists' early works such as Ai's *Violin* (1986) and Mei's *Exile* (1983), an aesthetic connection is certainly discernible.⁵¹¹ However, by the late 1980s, Mei notes his interest in Dadaism had diminished and he was no longer interested in 'treating art like a weapon', but wanted instead to explore more 'humanistic concerns' relating to notions of identity and citizenship, and belonging.⁵¹² Mei explains that without freedom of expression, artists often resort to using art as a vehicle to vent their frustration and anger. 'We have to free ourselves before we think art' (sic), he says.⁵¹³

In 1983, the artist produced a mixed media work, poignantly titled *Exile* (fig. 3.2), which explored these humanistic concerns in relation to his own experience of dislocation and alienation living overseas. This two dimensional

⁵⁰⁸ Chen, 'Interview with Mei Dean-E', *Displacement*, 2003, p.23.

⁵⁰⁹ Ai lived in New York from 1981-1993 and he attended the Parsons School of Design.

⁵¹⁰ In 2011 a survey exhibition of Ai's work was shown at the TFAM only months after he was released from detention by Chinese authorities (see Chapter Eight pp.418-419)

⁵¹¹ Mei said he and Ai used to talk about Dadaism and Duchamp occasionally when they met up at openings. Mei claims Ai was 'quite depressed at this time in New York and he was very cynical- he doesn't want to talk about hope'. Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁵¹² Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 1998, Taipei.

⁵¹³ Mei Dean-E, Email to the Author, 19 Sept. 2012.

work comprises two axes, realistically painted against a white background, which are represented horizontally and seamlessly joined at the cleaver. A real metal chain attached to one of the axe handles is linked to a sign in the uppermost right corner of the picture. The artist has altered the words on the sign, which would typically state 'exit' to 'exile'. During this period, Mei began to question the meaning of identity, both in a political and cultural sense, as a citizen of a 'non-nation nation-state'. In New York he worked for a Chinese newspaper which reported on the mounting tensions between Taiwan and China,⁵¹⁴ and he acknowledges that these political issues, coupled with his own sense of difference and displacement in New York, made him acutely conscious of his own identity as he began to question his own sense of citizenship and belonging.⁵¹⁵

Taiwan consciousness in art – bridging the local / international divide

In 1990, after the lifting of martial law, Mei returned to live in Taiwan permanently. He says, 'The reason I came back is because things had become freer. We could speak out and do our art, and I thought there was something I could do in Taiwan'.⁵¹⁶ Mei was one of many overseas-trained artists who returned to Taiwan during this period of political liberalisation and economic prosperity. These artists brought back with them new and different ideas and practices, which certainly contributed to the diversification and internationalisation of Taiwan's art field. However, as indicated in Chapter One, their return also generated tensions within the art field. Local artists and critics who had remained in Taiwan felt threatened by these overseas-trained

⁵¹⁴ In this newspaper, Mei's task was to research newsworthy political events, including Taiwan-China relations. Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 1998, Taipei.

⁵¹⁵ This idea of displacement or exile has been a recurring theme in Mei's work as the title of one of his solo exhibitions (*Displacement: Mei Dean-E Solo Exhibition*, presented at MOCA Taipei in 2003) reflects. Anecdotal evidence suggests Mei has dual US and Taiwan citizenship, but this has not been confirmed either way by the artist. This issue of dual citizenship has been a contentious issue politically as exemplified in the 2008 Presidential elections when Ma Ying-jeou's family connections to the United States was brought into question and when several KMT officials have reportedly retained their US residency status or US citizenship while serving in government.

⁵¹⁶ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 1998, Taipei.

artists and criticised their Western-derived art forms and influences. They were accused of being disloyal for leaving Taiwan and abandoning the fight for democratisation, and of being overly influenced by the West.⁵¹⁷ Local art critics such as Ni Tsai-chin (倪再沁) (who, paradoxically, had studied in France) criticised artists, including Mei, for 'staying overseas for too long', and for their so-called 'blind imitation of the West'.⁵¹⁸ Distinctions between localism and internationalism were forged in the art field, which revolved around the idea of *bentu*, or what was considered *Taiwanese*. In an interview in 2007, Mei says:

Some artists don't have the chance to go abroad – they think people like us who have a degree are too Western-influenced and they feel threatened. They think living in Taiwan is all important. Some scholars who returned from the West with PhDs used French theory and this made locals like Ni nervous as they didn't understand these terms. So there is a kind of gap. Peoples' careers were affected and artists feel they have to defend themselves.⁵¹⁹

Five years later, he explains that the 'West' had, until now, been regarded in Taiwan as more 'superior' and 'progressive' than the 'East', and people would adopt Western art theory without thinking about the political environment.⁵²⁰

These overseas-trained artists not only returned to a democratised (and polarised) society, but to one that was also significantly more prosperous. During the 1980s, rapid economic development and urbanisation contributed towards the exponential growth of the visual art market, and during the late 1980s and early 1990s numerous public, commercial, and alternative art galleries opened. A new class of affluent, Taiwan-born art investors and collectors emerged, and works that were seen to embody Taiwan consciousness (*bentu yishi*) were generally promoted by local art critics, such as Ni, and by galleries.⁵²¹ 'By the early 1990s, *bentu* was "hot" (*re*)'⁵²² and this, Mei says, was reflected in the art market:

⁵¹⁷ See Yang Mao-lin's comments in Chapter Four p.211

⁵¹⁸ Ni, 'Western Art Made in Taiwan', in *Taiwan Consciousness*, pp.85-86 (in Chinese).

⁵¹⁹ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

⁵²⁰ Mei Dean-E, Email to the Author, 19 Sept. 2012.

⁵²¹ See Chapter Four pp. 210-211.

[By the late 1980s] many farmers and landlords were rich – I know many people who suddenly became rich at that time – they enjoy their life...and they want to build their confidence through culture. They [galleries and art collectors] have money to buy things, but they don't care what is art – they say it is local art – that this subject is related to Taiwan's history or something. But they [the galleries and art collectors] don't know what art or identity is. They are rich and proud, and just want to profit from the situation. The economic miracle brings us hope, but why [were] these people buying these works related to localism – what is real Taiwanese?⁵²³

Although Mei's works were exhibited in several museum-based local and international group exhibitions, including *Taiwan Art 1945-1993* (1993), *Quest for Identity* (1996), *Site of Desire* (1998), *Visions of Pluralism* (1999) (see Chapters One, Two and Eight), his works were not widely collected, except very occasionally by museums, and he did not have a regular patron, as did local painters such as Yang Mao-lin. Artists who worked in mixed media and installation art were generally viewed within the local art field as 'foreign' and were not as popular as painters, a matter which is further discussed in relation to Wu Mali's work in Chapter Five. For this reason amongst others, several alternative art spaces, such as IT Park (伊通公園), Space II (二號公寓), and New Paradise (新樂園藝術空間) were established to exhibit more innovative and experimental art forms, including mixed media and installation art.⁵²⁴ These alternative spaces and art collectives were set up by some local, but mostly overseas-trained artists who returned to Taiwan in the late-1980s and early 1990s. They offered an exhibiting space, a place to share ideas with like-minded artists, and they provided a refuge for artists whose works were dismissed by local critics as 'too avant-garde' and 'foreign'. Mei states '*bentuhua* was against avant-garde or experimental art – many people think

⁵²² Mei Dean-E, Interview the Author, 2007, Taipei

⁵²³ Mei Dean-E, Interview the Author, 2007, Taipei. Mei Dean-E, Email to the Author, 19 Sept. 2012. It is relevant to note that individuals who had made their fortunes in technology also became art collectors and were keen supporters of *bentu* in art.

⁵²⁴ IT Park was established by a commercial photographer and a small group of artists in 1988 and officially opened in 1990. Space II (also called 'Apartment 2') opened in 1989 and was an artist collective formed by a larger group of artists and no longer exists. New Paradise (Shin Leh Yuan, or SLY) was established in 1995 by many of the same artists who established Space II. In addition the Society for Contemporary Art (SOCA) (藝術空間) was another alternative art space that opened during this period.

these are too Western – they worry and think Taiwan art has decayed. But we don't agree'.⁵²⁵

Although Mei was labelled an 'internationalist', he did not join any particular artist group or gallery and, steering clear of art politics, he carefully navigated these issues. Yet, at the time, he says he still felt marginalised, which is largely due to the fact that he was not 'Taiwanese'. Mei was born in Taiwan, but his parents were from Shanghai, immigrating to Taiwan in the 1940s; hence, the artist was categorised a *waishengren*. His father was a commercial businessman and did not serve the KMT government or army. Nevertheless, his family lived in the same *juancun* (眷村), or residential compound established by the KMT for the families of servicemen and Mei went to a primary school established for the children of KMT officers.⁵²⁶ These *juancun* are described as "refugee" enclaves' for Chinese exiles who became part of the privileged class, and they were viewed as 'bastions of colonial entitlement' by the comparatively disadvantaged Taiwanese.⁵²⁷ However, with the rise of democratisation and Taiwanisation, these *waishengren* were eventually demoted to 'minority' status and consigned to the periphery.⁵²⁸ Mei observes,

⁵²⁵ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

⁵²⁶ Mei says that 'out of a total of forty-six children there were only three or four Taiwanese in my grade'. He says it was difficult to get into this school, and most Taiwanese were poor, but the Mainlanders had connections and were relatively wealthy. However, at the high school Mei attended most of the students were Taiwanese and he was the outsider. He says they called him and other *waishengren* or 'A-San' meaning 'from far away mountains' which he compares to what aboriginals were called, being '*san di ren*' meaning people living in the mountains. Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei. This is Mei's own perspective, and others who grew up in the *juancun*, and who were less privileged, had different experiences.

⁵²⁷ Margaret Hillenbrand, 'The National Allegory Revisited: Writing Private and Public in Contemporary Taiwan', *positions: east asia cultures critique*, vol. 14, no. 3, Winter 2006, p.650. <https://muse.jhu.edu/journals/positions/v014/14.3hillenbrand.html> (accessed 26/2/2012). Hillenbrand notes that there is a new genre described as 'juancun fiction' by Taiwan writers. See for example essays in Su Weizhen (ed.), *台灣眷村小說選 (A Selection of Taiwan's Juancun Fiction)*, Eryu wenhua chubanshe, Taipei, 2004 (in Chinese).

⁵²⁸ For further information on the Mainlanders, on their arrival in Taiwan and the ways they have been politically and culturally marginalised see Corcuff, 'Taiwan's "Mainlanders", New Taiwanese?', in *Memories of the Future*, 2002, pp.163-195; Rosemary Haddon, 'Being/Not Being at Home in the Writing of Zhu Tianxin', in *Cultural, Ethnic, and Political Nationalism*, 2005, pp.103-124.

I'm aware I'm a minority [in Taiwan]. When I talk about my experience most people don't understand and they say it is my problem because my parents and grandparents are not native [Taiwanese]. Many collectors say they don't want to buy art from second generation *waishengren* – we're on the margins. [In a later interview he added] Sometimes I talk to Taiwanese, and [even though] I agree with their ideas, they still think because my parents are immigrants my loyalty is unreliable and they do not trust me.⁵²⁹

The curator and art critic, Victoria Lu, whose parents were also from Shanghai,⁵³⁰ was also a *waishengren*. During the 1990s Lu publicly criticised the ways she and other *waishengren* were being discriminated against, ethnically and culturally, by Taiwanese nationalists in the art community; and eventually she moved to Shanghai.⁵³¹ However, Mei, who is less outspoken and arguably more emotionally detached from these issues, persisted in his efforts to engage intellectually in this identity debate, which, he concedes, had become highly politicised.

Searching for identity [in Taiwan] is not philosophical, it is political. *Bentuhua* was like a kind of zeal – it was almost religious, like believing in God – and people don't want to question – they just judge. I think *bentuhua* should be discussed in a more academic way – rather than just as this kind of zeal.⁵³²

Mei was one of the few artists in Taiwan who voluntarily participated in the identity debate about Taiwan consciousness in art, which had polarised most of Taiwan's art community in the early 1990s. In response to Ni Tsai-chin's divisive paper (written in Chinese) entitled, *Western Art Made in Taiwan*, Mei wrote several articles that emphasised the need to develop a more critical, objective, and open-minded view of identity issues in art. Three of these articles were published in *Lion Art* magazine and three were re-printed in the book *Taiwan Consciousness in Taiwan Art*.⁵³³ In one of his first articles, *Taiwan Modern Art and Taiwan Consciousness* (台灣現代藝術本土意識的探討),⁵³⁴ Mei

⁵²⁹ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 1998 and 2007, Taipei.

⁵³⁰ Lu's uncle was also a leading politician in the pro-Chinese unification New Party (see Chapter Eight p.415).

⁵³¹ See Chapter Eight pp.415-416.

⁵³² Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

⁵³³ For more information on Ni's article and the book see Chapter One pp.72-73.

⁵³⁴ Mei's article 台灣現代藝術本土意識的探討 ('Taiwan Modern Art and Taiwan Consciousness') was originally published in 雄獅美術 (*Lion Art*), no.249, Nov. 1991, pp.110-

analyses the origin and meaning of *bentu yishi* (Taiwan consciousness) in art and calls attention to the need to engage with other cultures in order to broaden the debate and situate Taiwan's culture in the 'global mainstream'.⁵³⁵ Mei asserted that Taiwan consciousness should not be defined in native-foreign oppositional terms, but should be viewed as inter-relational, as a 'relationship between individuals, country, family, and culture'.⁵³⁶ He also emphasises the importance of history, liberalism, and the 'positive values' of Chinese humanism (中國式人道主義)⁵³⁷ in providing a platform for intellectual inquiry and open dialogue.

In other articles Mei criticises the ways *bentu* had become emotive and over-politicised in the art field, and argues that analyses of art had become superficial, based on subject matter and form, rather than on ideas.⁵³⁸ He concludes that *bentu* is an ideology that centres on three key issues: nationalism; the artist's origin or birthplace; and xenophobia or 'rejecting outsiders' (*paita* 排他).⁵³⁹ When questioned about this particular definition of *bentu*, Mei explained that

This is an ideology that was coming from emotion. At that time we don't have art criticism we just argue about what is "good" and "bad". [I think] it is based on *pai ta* [rejection of outsiders] and on localism and internationalism.⁵⁴⁰

Mei also highlighted the paradoxical aspects of this identity debate in which Western-derived theories, terms and artistic forms and styles were

113 (in Chinese). It was re-printed in 台灣美術中的台灣意識 前九零年代台灣美術 (*Taiwan Consciousness in Taiwan Art*), 1994, pp.169-176 (in Chinese).

⁵³⁵ Mei Dean-E, 'Taiwan Modern Art', in *Taiwan Consciousness*, 1994, p.169-176 (in Chinese).

⁵³⁶ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

⁵³⁷ Mei Dean-E, 'Taiwan Modern Art', in *Taiwan Consciousness*, 1994, p.172 (in Chinese).

⁵³⁸ Mei Dean-E, 台灣現代藝術「主體」的迷思('The Myth of the "Subject" of Taiwan Modern Art') in *Taiwan Consciousness in Taiwan Art*, 1994, pp. 273-379 (orig. published in *Lion Art*, no.261, Nov. 1991, pp.16-18) (in Chinese).

⁵³⁹ Mei Dean-E, [本土] 誠可貴, 「真理」價更高 ('Local is Precious, Truth is Worth More'), in *Taiwan Consciousness in Taiwan Art*, 1994, pp.217-224. (orig. published in *Lion Art*, no.255, May 1992, pp.20-23) (in Chinese).

⁵⁴⁰ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei. In response to this quote Mei later remarked: 'I should say the whole 90s is a movement for Taiwanese to learn "identity". Now, the whole situation changes, no one talk "bentu" but, for my opinion, I think "identity" is getting more and more important' (sic). Mei Dean-E, Email to the Author, 19 Sept. 2012.

appropriated by nativist critics and artists to discuss or evoke notions of cultural authenticity. In Mei's view, 'if we want to talk about "modern", "contemporary" or "avant-garde" at least we have to know what these words mean'; and he adds that many of these terms have since become outdated in the West.⁵⁴¹ In another interview Mei is more circumspect, simply remarking, 'frankly speaking, most of the local culture and art-related discourse has been learnt from the West – including my own art education, which was very Western' in a traditional sense.⁵⁴² Inspired by semiotics and Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophical theories on the relationship between language, meaning, and reality,⁵⁴³ Mei has consciously struggled to invent what he describes as a 'new language' that transcends native-foreign binaries, and his art was a vehicle through which he endeavoured to develop this new language.

Politics, identity and art

In 1991, Mei created *This is Taiwan* (這是一個台灣) (fig. 3.3) which is simply a map of the island of Taiwan which has, incongruously, been cast in lead. Under this map the words 'This is Taiwan' have been inscribed. The significance of naming 'Taiwan' has already been discussed (see Introduction and Chapter One), and the title of this work calls attention to the existence of Taiwan as a geopolitical entity. During the early-mid 1990s, maps of Taiwan, and particularly historic or antique maps, were widely collected and reproduced and were a key source of inspiration for other artists including Yang Mao-lin.⁵⁴⁴ However, for artists like Yang, the map of Taiwan was a visual metaphor for the nation's coming of age, transforming from a colony into a democratised nation-state, and it was used to engender a sense of national consciousness

⁵⁴¹ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 1998, Taipei.

⁵⁴² Chen Hsiang-chun, 'Interview with Mei Dean-E', in *Displacement*, 2003, p.31.

⁵⁴³ Ludwig Wittgenstein's (1889-1951) seminal book *Philosophical Investigations* which focuses on the meaning and function of language (and included his famous theory on the 'duck-rabbit') has been particularly influential in the humanities. Mei says his theories on 'language-games' have informed his art practice.

⁵⁴⁴ For more information Yang Mao-lin's use of maps see Chapter Four p.218, 220-221. Also artists including Yang Cheng-yun and Kuo Wei-kuo used maps in their work.

and pride.⁵⁴⁵ The title, subject, and the solid and enduring form of this particular work might also suggest this is a celebratory “reclamation” of the nation; but this is not the case. The artist says he chose lead intentionally, not only for its cold, monochromatic, and hard-edge appearance, but also because it is a poison that pollutes and destroys life. He does not elaborate on the meaning of this work, and it is unclear whether this is a visual metaphor of Taiwan’s environmental degradation,⁵⁴⁶ or whether it alludes to the effects of political indoctrination. However, it is worthy to note that, in Chinese Mandarin, the pronunciation of the word ‘poison’, or *du* (毒) is the same as that of ‘independence’ (獨) (as in ‘Taiwan Independence’ *Taidu* 臺獨), which, as Chang and Holt point out, the KMT once described as ‘Taiwan’s poison’.⁵⁴⁷ However, Mei does not take political sides and, unsurprisingly, he rejects this interpretation; he does, however, remark upon the infectious influence of Taiwan nationalism on people’s minds during this period.⁵⁴⁸

As previously discussed, Taiwan-born President Lee Teng-hui’s ascendancy to power in 1991 signified the end of Chinese-KMT political and cultural hegemony and the successful democratisation and Taiwanisation of Taiwan.⁵⁴⁹ This political process gave rise to an upsurge of Taiwan nationalism, Taiwan-China separatism, and a radical re-assessment of Taiwan’s history, particularly of events such as the 2/28 incident in 1947. As Mei points out, for many Taiwanese, memories of this uprising lingered and, as indicated in Chapter

⁵⁴⁵ During the 1990s maps of Taiwan were often represented in the shape of a sweet potato not only because of Taiwan’s geographical form but the sweet potato was also a staple food for Taiwanese peasants. This emblem has been embraced by the pro-independence opposition DPP.

⁵⁴⁶ For example, the establishment of nuclear power stations on the island attracted significant media and public attention on the island during this period, and is an issue Wu Mali addressed in her work (see Chapter Five p.251)

⁵⁴⁷ Chang and Holt, ‘Symbols in Conflict’, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 2007, p.135.

⁵⁴⁸ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei. It is relevant to note that the art critic Chen Tai-song also interprets this particular work in relation to Taiwan independence. See Chen Tai-song, ‘Mei Dean-E’s Political Iconography’, in *Displacement*, 2003, p.39.

⁵⁴⁹ For further information on the ‘Taiwanization of Taiwan’s Politics’ see Bruce Jacobs essay of the same name in *Cultural Ethnic and Political Nationalism in Contemporary Taiwan*, 2005, pp.17-55. Taiwanisation is discussed in Chapter One pp.54-59.

One, families of victims who were killed by the KMT Army harboured a deep sense of distrust and resentment against the former KMT government and its system of authoritarian rule.

In 2.2.8/ *History-Blind* (1992) (fig. 3.4), Mei reflects on this 'history of hate' triggered by the 2/28 incident and the ethnic and political wedge that had been driven between the *benshengren* and *waishengren*. On a broader level, this work also responds to the rise of the 'Taiwan Studies Fever' and the ways history was being re-written and politicised, potentially 'blinding' people to historical realities.⁵⁵⁰ 2.2.8/ *History-Blind* is a triptych, comprising three large framed circles created from many smaller pastel coloured dots. From afar, the viewer is just able to identify the numerals '2', '2', '8' emerging, like an optical illusion, from each circle. This work was inspired by Ishihara's famous colour perception test based on the same large circles of small and different coloured dots.⁵⁵¹ In the centre of each large circle a number or shape is visible only to those who have normal colour vision; to others, it is either difficult to discern or invisible. 2.2.8/ *History-Blind* is a simple but compelling work and, rather than being didactic as works based on this incident often were during this period, it encourages the viewer to think about the relationship between history, and the ways it is perceived and remembered. In relation to this point, Mei points out that

A deep political consciousness is constantly obstructing the writing of history. History itself is shot through with fabrication, bias, and taunts. However, in great narratives that are glutted with absurdity, contradictions and paradox...this indignation, criticism and derision can ferment and turn into inspiration.⁵⁵²

During the 1990s, many artists (including Yang Mao-lin, Wu Mali and Yao Jui-chung), delved into Taiwan's history, seeking to discover the roots of Taiwan's 'native' identity; and, or to question and challenge official narratives and

⁵⁵⁰ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 2007 and 1998, Taipei.

⁵⁵¹ This test was invented by Shinobu Ishihara a Japanese ophthalmologist in the early twentieth century to detect colour blindness.

⁵⁵² Mei, 'Artist Statement', in *Displacement*, 2003, p.52.

popular perceptions of Taiwan's history and identity. Mei viewed Taiwan's history from a relatively broad geo-cultural perspective, exploring Taiwan's historical connections with China and also with Japan. In *Silk Road Broche China* (1993) (figs. 3.5 & 3.6) Mei turns to Chinese tradition, or more specifically to ancient Chinese philosophies and beliefs, in an attempt to deconstruct the meaning, which he describes as the 'structure of thinking', underpinning notions of identity in Taiwan. In an interview he argues that

I think we must go into the structure of thinking – maybe what the Chinese call 'tradition' - that goes more into the content of art - which you can find in religions like Tao, Confucianism and Chinese medicine - or *I-Ching*. I hope Taiwan's identity is based on some of these good qualities, which are part of our tradition.⁵⁵³

Silk Road Broche China is a large and multifaceted mixed-media installation comprising a disparate collection of man-made objects and organic materials that have been carefully arranged like archaeological findings in several low-level glass cabinets, which have been placed in the middle of the room.⁵⁵⁴ Inside these display cases are bottles of Chinese medicine, a gourd, a mortar and pestle; and several small collages the artist has created from maps, Petri dishes, a Chinese anatomical chart of the human body, and historical photographs of such things as opium dens. On the walls around this installation is a large map of China onto which the artist has seemingly randomly attached several silk worm cocoons, and on the adjoining wall is a close-up photograph of a silk worm. In this work the artist sets out to visually map and 'excavate' China's famous Silk Road, which was one of the world's major trading routes connecting East and West. Here, the Silk Road refers metaphorically to the processes of cross-cultural fertilisation that Mei views as an integral part of Chinese civilisation; and the silk worm, which was first bred in China, is a signifier of these processes of cross-pollination, and what the artist describes as 'the energy of change in Chinese culture'.⁵⁵⁵ In addition, Mei

⁵⁵³ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 1998, Taipei.

⁵⁵⁴ This description is based on the work's display in the exhibition *Post-Martial Law vs. Post'89* (2007) which I saw at the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts in Taichung.

⁵⁵⁵ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

recalls that at school they were also encouraged to raise silk worms, 'because the KMT government in Taiwan wanted to remind people of China', and in New York he began thinking about how he might use them in an artwork.⁵⁵⁶

This work is as much a philosophical investigation into the meaning of culture and tradition as it is a spiritual quest for Mei to discover the roots of his identity. When travel restrictions to China had been lifted, Mei visited the Mainland for the first time in 1989, just after the Tiananmen massacre. Mei recalls,

I was excited and astonished because I never thought that next door [to Taiwan] there was such a big land and large population...I began to think about what is real Chinese culture, in a global sense, and how it became modernised. I don't think other Taiwanese think about this because there is too much tension between Taiwan and China and people just want to make their [political] position known. [In this work] I'm not thinking about the nation or country. I'm questioning who are the Chinese people and what is tradition.⁵⁵⁷

It is instructive to compare this work with Yang Mao-lin's *Yun Mountain Memorandum* series (see Chapter Four), which, rather than focusing on China's cultural heritage, calls attention to Taiwan's *Austronesian* roots. Unlike Mei, Yang was a Taiwan nationalist and, in his work, images of Taiwan loom large – portrayed as a land inhabited only by aboriginals and wild animals; or as a territory conquered by foreign colonialists. However, in Mei's visual historiography, the presence of Taiwan is comparably marginal, represented by just a few small and inconsequential images, including a map of the island, an image of the Presidential Palace, and a portrait of Sun Yat-sen. Moreover, in Mei's work, Taiwan is not viewed as separate, but is incorporated into a grand narrative on Chinese civilisation.⁵⁵⁸ In an effort to transcend the politics of identity and ethnicity, this work seeks to open up cultural dialogue between

⁵⁵⁶ Mei adds that when he returned to Taiwan he discovered a silk worm farm in Miaoli where he carried out research on breeding silk worms and this research became the foundation of this artwork. Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁵⁵⁷ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei; Mei, Email to the Author, 16 July 2012.

⁵⁵⁸ For further discussion about this work see Chen, 'Mei Dean-E's Political Iconography', in *Displacement*, 2003, p.41.

Taiwan and China by focusing on humanistic concerns and shared traditions. However, Mei claims that some curators and critics questioned his motives and whether he had, in his words, 'the legitimacy to look at Chinese culture like this because I was not living in China and was not Chinese', despite the fact that he had been labelled a *waishengren*.⁵⁵⁹ The extent to which these criticisms impacted on the artist and influenced his new work is unclear, but after making this series Mei turned his attention to local political issues.

In *Ai Dun Di Ti* (1994) (fig. 3.7) Mei directly engages in contemporary political debates regarding Taiwan's identity and its relationship with China. This installation is one of Mei's signature works, which has been widely exhibited and displayed in various configurations.⁵⁶⁰ It featured, for example, in the TFAM's 1996 Taipei Biennale, *Quest for Identity* (Chapter One), where it resembled an official Chinese government reception room for foreign dignitaries. My account of its display is based on this particular exhibition.

Entering a dimly lit corridor, the viewer approaches a thin line of red carpet at the far end of which two framed portraits of the former leaders of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC), Deng Xiaoping and Lee Teng-hui, hang side-by-side against their respective national flags, which the artist has cunningly reversed (fig. 3.8). On the left wall, a large assemblage of objects and images is displayed against a spot-lit glass wall cabinet. These include a collection of small, gold ceremonial plates upon which are depicted two national flags – the ROC flag, and another which incorporates the flags from the few countries with which Taiwan has diplomatic relations.⁵⁶¹ Beneath these flags, inscribed in English, are the words 'Long Live Friendship' in Chinese and English. On the wall, scattered around these gold plates are

⁵⁵⁹ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁵⁶⁰ This installation, or parts of it, has been shown in numerous configurations at various galleries including at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in 2003; as well as Galerie Pierre in 1996; and Eslite (Cherng Pinn) Gallery 1992.

⁵⁶¹ See Introduction p.1, fn. 2.

Xeroxed images of the same black and white image of the 'Two Fathers of the Nation' - Mao Zedong (1945-1976) and Sun Yat-sen. These Xeroxed images were reproduced from an earlier work, *Three Principles Reunite China* (1993) (fig. 3.9), a title based on Sun Yat-sen's *Three Principles of the People*, which formed the basis of KMT doctrine in Taiwan.⁵⁶² In this particular work the artist skilfully digitally re-configures the portraits Mao and Sun so their faces merge like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle. Mao's flushed and fleshy pink face peers out from the comparably austere portrait of Sun whose image is depicted mostly in black and white. Given the dominance of Mao in this particular image, the art critic and artist Wang Fu-dong (王福東) questions whether Mei is alluding to the key role played by China in Taiwan's quest for national identity.⁵⁶³ Given the title of the work and the juxtaposition of these two figures, in my view the artist is contemplating the contemporary significance of *The Three Principles* in relation to unification and the identity of the Founding Father of Greater China.

At the far end of this wall, a cluster of ROC national flags stand to attention alongside another portrait of Sun Yat-sen. In the middle of this wall, an enlarged logo of the United Nations shimmers in sparkling gold glitter against a sky-blue backdrop. On a large map of the world, the Chinese character *li* (trans. as 'ritual' or 'etiquette' 禮) has been formed from various national flags. Below, sitting on a mantelpiece, cloaked by the ROC flag, is a glass-encased gold sabre, signifying a Japanese ceremonial sword as a visual metaphor for Japanese colonisation. Walking into an adjacent room, the viewer encounters a comparatively sparse room, in the middle of which sits an antique Chinese wooden desk upon which a few books and official documents are neatly placed (fig. 3.10). A large red lacquer plaque hangs in the centre of the wall - with the

⁵⁶² These 'Three Principles' include nationalism (*minzu*, 民族), democracy (*minquan*, 民權), and peoples' welfare (*minsheng*, 民生)

⁵⁶³ Wang Fu-dong, 三民主義統一中國? —梅丁衍的《藝術行為論》('Three Principles of the People Unify China? Mei Dean-E's "Art Action Theory"'), 雄獅美術 (*Lion Art*), no.251, 1992, p.158 (in Chinese).

words 'Identity' in English and Chinese boldly inscribed in gold. The Chinese title of this work, *Ai Dun Di Ti* (哀敦砥悌), is not only a phonetic transliteration of the English word 'identity', but the artist has consciously and strategically selected four Chinese characters translated as 'sad' (*ai*); 'honest/sincere' (*dun*); 'steadfast' (*di*); and 'respect for elder brothers/ elder males' (*ti*).

Upon the wooden desk in this room is an official Chinese treatise (*gong wen* 公文), on top of which a small photograph of Sun Yat-sen is framed between the flags of the Republic of China. Although the viewer might expect to read in this document a version of the *Three Principles of the People*, the artist has instead composed his own treatise (in Chinese). In this document Mei describes himself as the 'Representative of the Country of Li and Yi' (禮, 義), that is, of etiquette/ritual (*li* 禮) and justice (*yi* 義), terms used for centuries by the Chinese government to refer to their practice of diplomacy and system of government. However, Mei says that from the Qing dynasty (1644-1912), after numerous foreign invasions, and the loss of territory, the imperial rulers resorted to the practice of *wu li* (military might 武力). While they continued to uphold Confucian virtues, such as *li* and *yi*, the artist suggests it was merely a mask to cover up these rulers' self-seeking and often corrupt actions; and the Confucian idea of benevolence (仁政 *ren zheng*), the basis of Chinese diplomacy for centuries, was effectively disregarded in favour of military strength (*wu li*).

In this treatise the artist seeks to visually articulate some of these complex ideas, and he notes that, before creating this work, he read Confucius' philosophical writings, and the Five Moral Virtues, which are still officially promoted in Taiwan today.⁵⁶⁴ In more recent years there has been a revival of Confucianism, as evidenced by the mushrooming of Chinese Confucian

⁵⁶⁴ The five Moral Virtues of Confucianism are: *ren* (仁, humaneness/benevolence), *yi* (義, justice/Righteousness), *li* (禮, etiquette/propriety), *zhi* (智, knowledge/wisdom), *xin* (信, integrity/faithfulness).

institutes around the world;⁵⁶⁵ and it is relevant to note that in Taiwan this concept of benevolence was referenced in a recent speech by the current KMT President, Ma Ying-jeou, who declared that 'China should practise the principles of benevolence when dealing with Taiwan' and that it 'should be more generous, and not browbeat its smaller counterpart'.⁵⁶⁶ However, according to Mei, political and economic gain is still considered of greater importance than Confucian codes of moral behaviour; so that the belief that 'all men are brothers' is, he says, in fact a fallacy. About this work the artist remarks

...There's a saying we're all brothers. I am interested in this idea and [how it relates to] Taiwan's identity problem and to Chinese Confucianism. In an ironic way I put all the leaders together to study this idea and to explore ideas about ethnicity and identity.⁵⁶⁷

Against a backdrop of heightened Taiwan nationalism and growing Taiwan-China separatism (in the same year the PRC government fired ballistic missiles across the Taiwan Strait), it is not surprising that museum visitors read this work in a political context. As an artist who considers himself 'politically engaged' but rejects the title 'political artist', Mei states, 'I was not trying to solve any issue. I was just commenting on the political situation at the time.'⁵⁶⁸ The scholar, Dai Li-qing (戴麗卿), asserts that in this work the artist not only was seeking to establish a new interpretation of 'Chinese' identity, but also pointed out that it foreshadows the idea that Taiwan might one day become part of 'one China'.⁵⁶⁹ While Mei embraces aspects of Chinese cultural tradition, like the majority of people living in Taiwan, he opposes the idea of

⁵⁶⁵ The Chinese Confucian Institutes, to which I refer, promote Chinese language and culture in universities and research institutes world-wide. They are often closely associated with, and often funded by, the government of the People's Republic of China. The extent of the Chinese government's ideological and operational control over these institutes has been the subject of debate. The Taiwan government has established its own version of these overseas institutes, called *Taiwan shuyuan*, which also promote Chinese heritage and culture but within a broader paradigm which includes Taiwan and Tibet.

⁵⁶⁶ Ma Ying-jeou quoted in Ko Shu-ling, 'Ma Urges Taiwan to Show Wisdom', *Taipei Times*, 1/11/2010. <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2010/11/01/2003487435> (accessed 9/10/2011).

⁵⁶⁷ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 1998, Taipei.

⁵⁶⁸ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 1998, Taipei.

⁵⁶⁹ Dai Li-qing, 'If Civilian Art', *Modern Art*, 1996, p.16 (in Chinese).

unification with China, at least while it remains under Communist rule. In 2008, in an interview, Mei contemplated the idea of 'one China':

We have democracy and freedom of speech. This is the most important. Even though we share the same language, culturally many Taiwanese feel they are tourists in China. Some people say we should negotiate as one government. Can you imagine what kind of government this would be? It would be a tragedy. Each government is a tragedy now so imagine if you would combine [them]. I don't want my country to become like Hong Kong. Maybe I have a sense of a Utopian country.⁵⁷⁰

Taiwan's relations with China and the question of Taiwan's international status are recurring issues explored in Mei's work. For example, *Don't Rush, be Patient* (戒急用忍) (1998) (figs. 3.11 & 3.12), which featured in the 1998 Taipei Biennial *Site of Desire* (1998) and was discussed in Chapter Two, responds directly to mounting concerns regarding Taiwan's growing economic relationship with China. This hanging installation is over twelve metres long and comprises approximately 120,000 coloured beads.⁵⁷¹ When viewed from a distance these beads collectively depict a standard one thousand New Taiwan Dollar bank note with the portrait of the former Chinese Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek. However, in his usual subversive fashion, the artist subtly alters the portrait of this former Chinese Nationalist leader whose face conventionally appeared on the top left hand corner of Taiwan's banknotes; here he is now shown winking deviously at the viewer. He incorporates the words, 'cash my cheques', which in Chinese resembles the oral pronunciation of Chiang's name. In addition, the words, 'Central Bank of Taiwan', are substituted with 'Utopia Bank' (勿偷邦), which in Chinese is a homonym for 'Do not steal nation' (*wu tou bang*).

It is important to note that, at the time Mei created this work, Taiwan's official currency, the New Taiwan Dollar (NT or TWD) (新台幣),⁵⁷² had become a

⁵⁷⁰ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁵⁷¹ Contrary to the dimensions given in the TFAM catalogue, this work, according to the artist measures 410x1286cm.

⁵⁷² When the New Taiwan Dollar was first issued by the KMT in 1949 the *yuan*, which was China's standard currency, was regarded the official currency of the ROC. The New Taiwan

focus of national debate.⁵⁷³ It was argued that, as part of the process of Taiwanisation, the portraits of Chiang Kai-shek, and the Founding Father of the ROC, Sun Yat-sen (孫逸仙) should be removed from Taiwan's currency and replaced by local subjects.⁵⁷⁴ As Corcuff observes, since 1992 and 1996 two new coins that did not bear the portraits of Chiang or Sun, were already in circulation.⁵⁷⁵ Mei says he was aware of the attendant political and media furore, but his intention was not to focus exclusively on this, and instead he wanted to explore broader issues concerning Taiwan's desire for international recognition.⁵⁷⁶ In this hanging installation, the words 'Central Bank of Taiwan' are replaced by the words 'U-tou-bang-yinhang' (i.e. Utopia Bank), highlighting the politicisation and the spurious nature of what the artist describes as 'international cheque book diplomacy'.⁵⁷⁷ This is further emphasised, metaphorically, by the beaded curtain suggesting a 'veiling' or 'masking' of intent.

In a later work, entitled *Give me Hugs* (給我抱抱) (2003) Taiwan's ongoing national identity crisis and its struggle for international recognition is again

Dollar served as a de facto currency until 2000 when it was officially recognised as Taiwan's national currency. For further discussion of these changes in relation to identity construction see Corcuff, 'The Symbolic Dimension of Democratization and the Transition of National Identity Under Lee Teng-hui', in *Memories of the Future*, 2002, pp.92-95.

⁵⁷³ As an example of impassioned arguments for the 'de-sinification' of Taiwan's banknotes, see Chuang Chi-ting, 'Legislator Pans New Banknotes', *Taipei Times*, 17 Feb. 2001. <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/local/archives/2001/02/17/74035> (accessed 4/9/2011).

⁵⁷⁴ Although the portraits of these two former leaders had been removed from two new coins produced in the early 1990s, it wasn't until 1999 when a reform was officially passed to change some of Taiwan's new dollar bills. Although the one and two hundred dollar bills still bear the portraits of Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek respectively, the new \$500, \$1,000 and \$2,000 banknotes display localised images of Taiwan life and focus on themes including baseball, education and technology.

⁵⁷⁵ Corcuff, 'The Symbolic Dimension of Democratization', in *Memories of the Future*, 2002, p.92. Although the portraits of these two former leaders had been removed from two new coins produced in the early 1990s, it was not until 1999 when a reform was officially passed to change some of Taiwan's new dollar bills. Although the one and two hundred dollar bills still bear the portraits of Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek respectively, the new \$500, \$1,000 and \$2,000 banknotes display localised images of Taiwan life and focus on themes including baseball, education and technology.

⁵⁷⁶ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 1998, Taipei

⁵⁷⁷ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 1998, Taipei

foregrounded. In this interactive work, Mei constructs a large boxing ring, into which viewers are encouraged to enter. Scattered within this boxing ring are numerous large cushions made from fabric representing various countries' national flags.⁵⁷⁸ The title of this work recalls the nationalist rhetoric which gained widespread currency in the 1990s when political slogans such as '*Ai Guo*' ('Love your Country', 愛國) and pop songs such as 'Loudly Claim you Love Taiwan' were popular. As Chang and Holt remark, 'the symbol Taiwan, whether it designates a place or its people, represents something that must be nurtured and cared for'.⁵⁷⁹ In this installation Mei pokes fun at what he describes as the 'desperate' and 'humiliating' measures employed by the ROC government to attract international attention and promote Taiwan's national identity.⁵⁸⁰

The role of Japan in identity formation in Taiwan

As a manifestation of this desire for international recognition, in the late 1990s, Mei produced a series of mixed-media works that responded to the rise of pro-Japanese sentiment and President Lee Teng-hui's apparent obsession with Japan. In response to the widely publicized interview with Lee Teng-hui in the *Asahi Daily*, which fuelled tensions between Taiwan and China (discussed in Chapter Two),⁵⁸¹ Mei created the work *Taiwan Loves Japan/Japan Loves Taiwan* (1998) (figs. 3.13 & 3.14). As part of this installation, Mei reproduced a large, digitally manipulated portrait of Taiwan's leader whose hair has carefully been re-styled into a Samurai's top-knot (*chonmage*). Across Lee's torso is written (in Japanese) the words: 'I used to be Japanese until I was twenty-two. I find this word "China" misleading', which

⁵⁷⁸ In another installation created in the same year, entitled *Protocol Suit* (2003), Mei draws again on this fabric printed with different countries' national flags but this time he creates a man's tailored suit replete with bow tie. Against this suit hangs a large multi-coloured tapestry made from the national flags of the world. See *Displacement: Mei Dean-E Solo Exhibition*, 2003.

⁵⁷⁹ Chang and Holt, 'Symbols in Conflict', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 2007, p.142.

⁵⁸⁰ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 1998, Taipei.

⁵⁸¹ See Chapter Two, p.110. Tu Weiming, 'Cultural Identity and the Politics of Recognition', in *Contemporary Taiwan, The China Quarterly*, [special issue], 1996, p.87.

echoed comments made by Lee in the *Asahi Daily* interview. In the lower foreground of this image, the Presidential Palace, which the Japanese built during colonisation in Taiwan, is depicted; and behind the portrait of Lee, a Japanese woodcut image of Mt. Fuji, is represented.⁵⁸²

Placed around this central image are a series of the same small diptyches of a map of Taiwan upside-down, depicted against the imperial Japanese flag of the rising sun (*Kyokujitsu-ki*).⁵⁸³ This image is accompanied by the words 'Japan Loves Taiwan'; which is juxtaposed, at the far right hand side of this image with the aforementioned word 'Ai dun di ti'. On the adjacent wall, the current Japanese national flag (*Nisshōki*) is hung vertically; and on the floor, several small *tatami* mats are loosely scattered or are placed in configurations of four. Into each *tatami* mat the artist has cut a square, which is filled with white rice, and upon which a plastic banana is placed. Here, the artist is clearly alluding to the period of Japanese colonisation, when rice and bananas were the primary agricultural staples cultivated in Taiwan and exported by the Japanese. In the middle of each round *tatami* mat is a square hole - replicating the shape of ancient Chinese round coins with a square hole in the middle, which was the common design for most Chinese copper coins until the twentieth century. In this work they are a visual metaphor for the Japanese government's colonial ambitions in Taiwan, which they wanted to exploit and transform into a prosperous colony, to rival Western colonial outposts in other parts of Asia.⁵⁸⁴

Similarly in *Made in Taiwan* (1998) (fig. 3.15), the artist more explicitly critiques the Japanisation of Taiwan. This installation simply comprises a pair of traditional wooden Japanese sandals/thongs (*geta*) – except, symbolically, they have been re-shaped to form the map of Taiwan. Upon the sole of each

⁵⁸² This image of Mt. Fuji is based on a *ukiyo-e* woodblock print made by the famous Japanese artist, Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) and was part of the series *Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji* (1826-1833).

⁵⁸³ The *Kyokujitsu-ki* flag was adopted in the Meiji period and used during WWII.

⁵⁸⁴ On Japanese colonisation see Introduction (pp.19-20) and Chapter Two p.108.

sandal, the caption 'Made in Taiwan' is stamped – again in the shape of a traditional Chinese round coin. In relation to the work's title *Made in Taiwan*, which was also used by Yang Mao-lin (see Chapter Four), Mei states:

I am thinking about how objects can be transformed from simple consumer tokens into bearers of culture and history. All commercial products have special marks and symbols.⁵⁸⁵

On a broader level, Mei interprets this slogan, 'Made in Taiwan' with the 'production' of history, which, like objects, can be deconstructed, reassembled, misappropriated and copied:

Thinking and reading about Taiwan's history is like glancing over products, which has its own entertaining, consumer-driven pleasure...my works attempt to combine historicism, the worship of commercial totems and the meaning of political words.⁵⁸⁶

In response to the controversial book, entitled the *Taiwan Question (Taiwan ron)* (2000),⁵⁸⁷ by Japanese *manga*-novelist Yoshinori Kobayashi, Mei created *May I be Arrogant for a Moment?* (fig. 3.16) in 2000, the same year this book was published. This installation is one of Mei's more contemplative works, exploring the role of Taiwan's comfort women during Japanese occupation, an issue contentiously raised by Kobayashi in his illustrated narrative of Taiwan's history. Kobayashi asserted these local women willingly served the Japanese Empire, a view that diverged significantly from common knowledge that they were in fact lured or forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese government or military. Unsurprisingly, Kobayashi's claims attracted widespread publicity and criticism not only in Taiwan, but also in China, as it set out to promote the positive effects of Japanese imperialism, as a counter-narrative to historical accounts of Japanese oppression and brutality that prevailed in China, particularly in relation to Japan's role in the Nanjing Massacre.⁵⁸⁸ In this audio-

⁵⁸⁵ Mei Dean-E, 'Artist's Statement', in *Displacement*, 2003, p.53.

⁵⁸⁶ Mei Dean-E, 'Artist's Statement', in *Displacement*, 2003, p.53.

⁵⁸⁷ *Taiwan Ron* is a transliteration of the Japanese title. This book was first published in Japanese in 2000 and a year later it was translated in Chinese and was titled *Taiwan lun*.

⁵⁸⁸ For further information and a detailed critical appraisal of this book see Marukawa, Tetsushi. 'Situating Yoshinori Kobayashi's *Taiwan ron* ("The Taiwan Question") in East Asia', *Postcolonial Studies*, vol.6, issue 2, 2003, pp.239-244. DOI: 10.1080/13688790308102 (accessed 9/10/2011); Joyce C.H. Liu, 'Immanentism, Double Abjection, and the Politics of

visual installation, numerous floral printed umbrellas and cotton sun hats are placed on the floor, and serve as visual metaphors for femininity and protection, effectively standing in for these absent women. Archival film footage is projected onto two walls; and in one of these archival still images two men are seen climbing onto two large phallic-shaped military cannons; below, Japanese text suggestively declares 'my blood rushes with excitement'. The relationship between colonisation, patriarchal power, and gender inequality are the overarching themes of this work in which the artist contemplates the effects of Japanese colonisation and the meaning of 'localisation' in Taiwan.⁵⁸⁹

This work brings to mind Leo Ching's insightful comments in his book *Becoming "Japanese": Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation*, which examines how the Han-Chinese in Taiwan endured and navigated the Japanese government's practices of cultural integration.⁵⁹⁰ While the focus of this book is on historical and literary text and not on art, in the context of this identity discourse, Ching's conceptual distinction between the terms 'identity' and 'identification' is of relevance. Ching argues that national identity is not defined by the pre-constituted identity of a colonial power as it is commonly regarded, but rather by the historical conditions and processes of colonisation.⁵⁹¹ That is to say, through the process of colonisation one becomes conscious of the similarities and differences (in this case between the Japanese and Taiwanese), which helps define one's sense of national and self identity. This distinction between identity as a descriptor and state of being, and identification, as a process of becoming, are central, conceptually, to Mei's art practice and to his understanding of this discourse on Taiwan consciousness in

Psyche in (Post)colonial Taiwan', *positions: east asia cultures critique* (special issue on the 'Cultural State of Contemporary Taiwan'), vol. 17, issue 2, Duke University Press, Fall 2009, pp.261-287. DOI 10.1215/10679847-2009-001 (accessed 4/6/2012).

⁵⁸⁹ For further information see Chen, 'Interview with Mei Dean-E', in *Displacement*, 2003, pp.27-28.

⁵⁹⁰ Leo Ching, *Becoming "Japanese"*, 2001.

⁵⁹¹ Leo Ching, *Becoming "Japanese"*, 2001.

art. For Mei, identity is a philosophical question. He asks, 'what is the essence of identity? Everyone must learn who they are.'⁵⁹²

Delving into Taiwan's history

From the late 1990s, Mei began to carry out in-depth research into Taiwan's art history, focusing particularly on the 1930s and 1940s, and on artists who expressed left-wing 'idealism'⁵⁹³ and humanism in their works. These included Li Shih-chiao (李石樵), from whom Mei received his early art training,⁵⁹⁴ and whose paintings that typically represented the working classes were imbued with socialist ideas (e.g. *Happy Farmers*, 1946 and *Construction*, 1948).⁵⁹⁵ Mei has also undertaken extensive research on the woodcut artist, Huang Rong-tsan (黃榮燦), who left China and went to Taiwan in the 1940s. In 1952, during the White Terror period, Huang was arrested for espionage and later killed in 1952 by the KMT because they suspected he was a Communist sympathizer.⁵⁹⁶ Although some Taiwanese artists, such as Chen Cheng-po (陳澄波), who had been shot in the 2/28 incident in 1947, were receiving critical attention in the visual art field, there were many other artists, and particularly those from the Mainland of whom, Mei claims, people had not heard or knew very little about. Mei says this was in part due to the fact that courses on Taiwan's art history

⁵⁹² Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁵⁹³ Though he says he does not 'dare claim to be left-wing' as it is 'too difficult within a capitalist society'. Chen, 'Interview with Mei Dean-E', in *Displacement*, 2003, p.26.

⁵⁹⁴ Mei studied drawing in Li Shih-chiao's studio 1972-1973 (circa.) to prepare for the art school examination. Mei Dean-E, Email to the Author, 19 Sept. 2012.

⁵⁹⁵ Mei's research on Li Shih-chiao includes a survey of his still life paintings from 1946-1947. See Mei Dean-E, 戰後初期臺灣新現實主義美術之孕育及流產-以李石樵畫風為例 ('The Gestation and Miscarriage of New Realism in Taiwan in the Early Postwar Period: A Case Study of the Painting Style of Li Shih-chiao'), *Modern Art*, no. 88, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 1996, pp.42- 56 (in Chinese). In 1964 Li created a portrait of Chiang Kai-shek which, according to reports, was not a flattering representation of the President. Hsieh Li-fa, 中國左翼美術在台灣 ('Chinese Left-Wing Art in Taiwan'), 台灣文藝 (*Taiwan Wenyi*) no.101, Aug. 1986 (in Chinese); Lin Hsing-Yue and Hsiao Chong-ray, Interviews with the Author, 1995, Taipei and Tainan.

⁵⁹⁶ On the 'White Terror' period see Introduction, pp.20-21. Mei says that although the evidence shows Huang was certainly not a Chinese Nationalist it is unclear if he was in fact a Communist sympathizer (as many intellectuals were during this period), but because he worked in a newspaper Mei said he was regarded with some suspicion by the authorities. Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

were not offered in art schools until the 1990s and therefore his and earlier generations of artists only knew about Western and Chinese art. Mei teaches at Taiwan's oldest art school, the National Taiwan University of the Arts, and he says it was not until 1999 that students were able to study Taiwan's art history.⁵⁹⁷ He hoped his research would therefore help to build on the growing body of scholarship on Taiwan's art history, and would generate more interest in Taiwan's history and culture.

Between 2000 and 2002 Mei wrote a series of articles collectively titled *The Mystery of Huang Rong-tsan – The Forbidden Zone in Taiwan's Fine Art History* published (in Chinese) in the TFAM's journal *Modern Art*.⁵⁹⁸ The artist also created a series of artworks to pay tribute to Huang Rong-tsan, including *With Best Regards to Huang Rong-tsan* (1997) and *Brilliant Post* (2003) (fig. 3.17). In these works the artist seeks to re-instate Huang's identity, an artist believed by Mei to have been overlooked in Taiwan's art history.⁵⁹⁹ In *Brilliant Post* the artist creates an anamorphic image based on a woodblock print by Huang Rong-tsan, which is reflected in the shiny stainless steel-cylindrical column that sits in the middle of this image and effectively brings it to life. Of this work Mei states:

I feel that offering redress to Huang Rong-tsan is necessary, not only because he had cut masterful woodblock prints that were pointedly critical of the politics of the time, but also for another important reason: that there were many [...] individuals of Mainland descent who, like Huang Rong-tsan, had no family members in Taiwan who could help compile materials [...] or seek redress [...] after he died. It was only because his political leanings did not

⁵⁹⁷ Although the National Taiwan University of the Arts was not the first university in Taiwan to offer art courses (the National Taiwan Normal University, which is primarily a teachers' college, was the first), it is the oldest art school devoted solely to the arts. Yao Jui-chung comments that Taiwan art history courses began to be introduced at the National Taipei University of Art in the early 1990s. See Chapter Six.

⁵⁹⁸ Mei Dean-E, 黃榮燦疑雲—台灣美術運動的禁區 (上中) ('The Mystery of Huang Rong-tsan: the Forbidden Zone in Taiwan's Fine Art Movement' – First and Middle), *Modern Art*, issues 67,68, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 1996, pp. 40-63, pp. 38-53, pp. 62-76 (in Chinese).

⁵⁹⁹ In fact, Mei states that he first saw Huang's work in a political magazine in New York. See Mei Dean-E, 'The Mystery of Huang', *Modern Art*, 1996, pp.42-45 (in Chinese). Also see Chen Hsiang-chun, 'Mei Dean-E's Political Iconography', in *Displacement*, 2003, pp.45-46; and Chen, 'Interview with Mei Dean-E', in *Displacement*, 2003, pp.329-330. Hsieh Li-fa also wrote about Huang Rong-tsan. See Hsieh Li-fa, 'Chinese Left-Wing Art', 1986, pp. 129-156 (in Chinese).

conform to the government's that he was executed. I believe many other artists suffered the same fate as Huang Rong-tsan, but there was no one here who...heard or enquired about them.⁶⁰⁰

These works signify a radical shift in Mei's practice as he casts aside the political symbols and slogans used in earlier works to focus on what he describes as Taiwan's 'historical truths'.⁶⁰¹ He remarks that, with the rise of Taiwan nationalism, historical events like the 2/28 incident had become so politicised that their wider impact and significance in relation to human rights, was overlooked or relegated to the background.⁶⁰² These works might be read as a counter-narrative to the Taiwan-centred histories written during the 1990s that focused on the victimisation of Taiwanese during KMT rule, while ignoring the fact that Mainlanders had also been persecuted by the same regime. However, in these works, Mei does not seek to re-write Taiwan's history, or promote a particular political ideology, but rather sets out to question and challenge the ways history is written by focusing attention on those individuals who have been left out of Taiwan's grand narrative.

In early-mid 2000 the artist began collecting historical photographs, mostly portraits and scenes from the Japanese colonial period and the first decades of KMT rule, which are unremarkable but emblematic of the time. Mei says these photographs were readily and cheaply available in flea markets or on internet auction sites because people thought them unfashionable. After reading numerous books on Taiwan's history Mei said he wanted to use these photos to 'make [Taiwan's history] real', to instil a sense of historical consciousness, and 'make [this history] my own'.⁶⁰³ Mei views these photographs as ready-mades, which he digitally re-configures and imbues with new meaning and cultural significance. In a statement about these works he says, 'I use digital image processing techniques to reassemble historical memories, creating

⁶⁰⁰ Chen Hsiang-chun, 'Interview with Mei Dean-E', in *Displacement*, 2003, p.30.

⁶⁰¹ Chen Hsiang-chun, 'Interview with Mei Dean-E', in *Displacement*, 2003, p.29.

⁶⁰² Chen Hsiang-chun, 'Interview with Mei Dean-E', in *Displacement*, 2003, p.29.

⁶⁰³ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 2011, Taipei.

virtual scenarios to showcase the reality of colonial life, and by so doing raise fundamental questions concerning the nature of Taiwanese identity'.⁶⁰⁴

In his first series, collectively entitled *Taiwan Cider* (台灣西打) (2008) (fig. 3.18),⁶⁰⁵ Mei digitally appropriates photographic portraits taken during the period of Japanese colonial rule of soldiers, children standing to attention in a school photograph, and a studio photograph of several young men whose faces stare out at the viewer. These black and white photographs have been subtly digitally modified and enhanced with colour. In a subsequent series, entitled *Taiwan Cola* (2009), the artist focuses on the Cold War period, when the KMT were in power, and when American troops stationed in Taiwan imported Coca-Cola to Taiwan, thus giving this series its title. These ink-jet prints are computer-generated and comprise mostly still-lives depicted in a classical realist tradition. Works such as *Post-Civil War Memorandum* (2009) and *Retirelessness* (2009) (fig. 3.19) depict a KMT soldier's uniform hanging lifelessly on a grey wall in a vacant room. A pair of glasses sitting on a wooden chair, and a ribbon hanging alongside the uniform, reflect the absent soldier's personality and status. The monochromatic tone and formality of these photographs evoke a strong sense of melancholy reflecting on the lives once lived, long since forgotten, but which now Mei seeks to bring to life.

By the late 1990s, the debate on Taiwan's identity in the visual arts field had dissipated. According to Mei, the discussion 'degenerated' because there 'was no proper discussion, no questioning, and no focus... [just] invented logic'. In an interview conducted with the artist in 2007, the artist recalls that

This discussion just ended – people stopped talking about it – it was a great shame as for me it had just begun. I think *bentuhua* should be a philosophical

⁶⁰⁴ Mei Dean-E, Artist Statement - Taiwan Cider, IT Park.
<http://www.itpark.com.tw/artist/statement/36/23/en> (accessed 14/4/2012).

⁶⁰⁵ This series of photographs was exhibited at IT Park in 2008.

question because it is about humanism and I want to write about this but no one wants to discuss it – they just want to know your political standpoint.⁶⁰⁶

Mei continues to explore identity issues, but as his series *Taiwan Cider* and *Taiwan Cola* attests, in more recent years his work has become significantly more introspective and less political.

This chapter has focused on Mei's work produced mainly during the 1980s and 1990s, because it was during this period when these identity issues peaked, and when Mei was most prolific and directly engaged with Taiwan's identity politics. As an artist and art critic, Mei has explored identity issues from a wide range of political, cultural, and historical perspectives, and in ways quite dissimilar to other artists. This will become more apparent in the following three chapters. While focusing on Mei's artistic trajectory, and his views on Taiwan's identity discourse, I have also shown how Taiwan nationalism impacted on the visual art field more widely, forging an ethnic and cultural divide between the *benshengren* and *waishengren*, and between local and internationally trained artists. This is further explored in the following artist chapters. This divide effectively marginalised artists such as Mei Dean-E, who was neither a *benshengren* nor locally-trained, but, as demonstrated, nevertheless successfully navigated the politics of identity in strategic and innovative ways.

⁶⁰⁶ Mei Dean-E, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

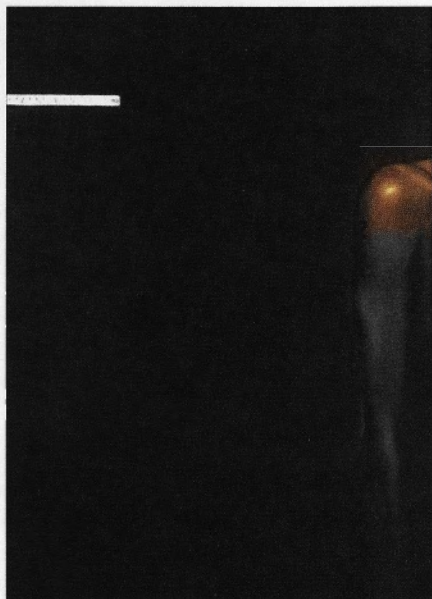


Figure 3.1: *No. 2 Construction*, 1979, oil on canvas



Figure 3.2: *Exile*, 1983, mixed media



Figure 3.3: *This is Taiwan*, 1991, relief lead and iron frame



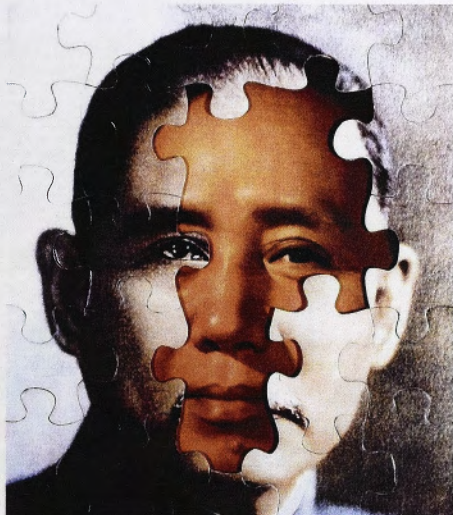
Figure 3.4: 2.2.8- *History Blind*, 1992, acrylic on canvas



Figures 3.5 & 3.6: *Silk Road Broche China*, 1993, mixed media installation
(top to bottom) installation view; detail from installation



Figures 3.7& 3.8: *Ai Dun Di Ti*, 1994, mixed media
(top to bottom) installation view; detail from installation



Figures 3.9 & 3.10 (top to bottom): *Three Principles Reunite China*, 1993, mixed media;
Ai Dun Di Ti, 1994, mixed media installation (detail)



Figures 3.11 & 3.12: *Don't Rush, be Patient*, 1998, mixed media installation
(top to bottom) installation view; detail from installation



Figures 3.13 & 3.14: *Taiwan Loves Japan/ Japan Loves Taiwan*, 1998, mixed media
(top to bottom) detail from installation; installation view



Figure 3.15: *Made in Taiwan*, 1998, wood, nylon

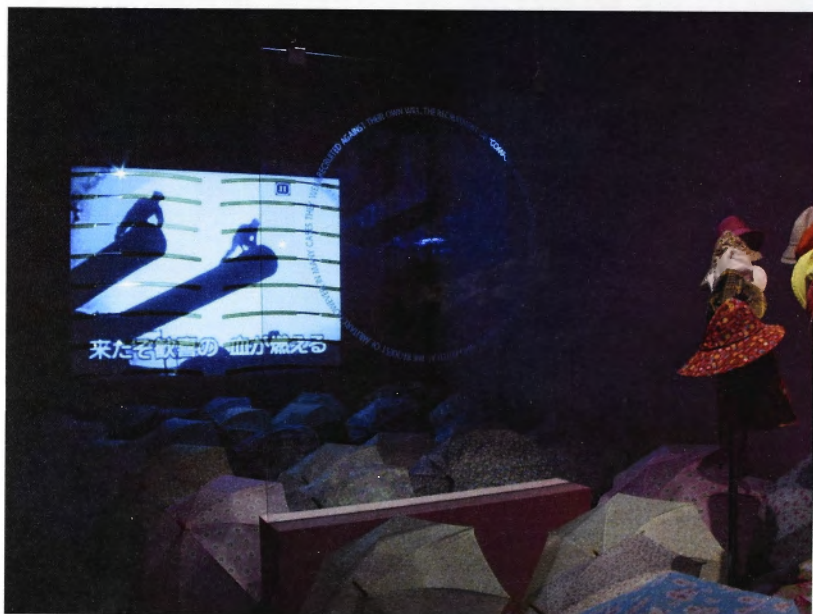


Figure 3.16: *May I be Arrogant for a Moment?*, 2000, mixed media installation

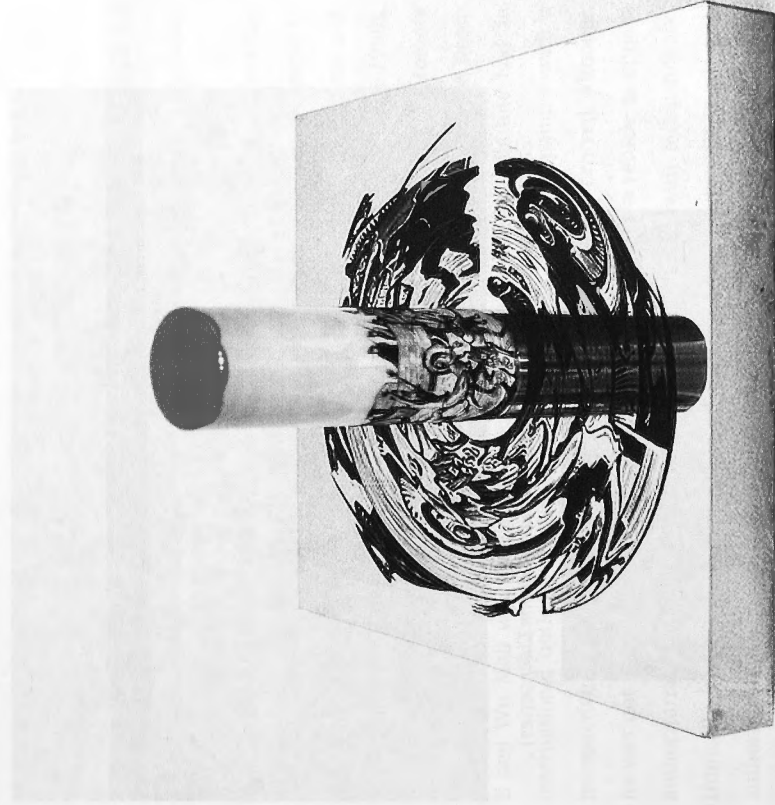


Figure 3.17: *Brilliant Post*, 2003, stainless steel and zinc



Figure 3.18: *Untitled*, 2008, C-print (from the *Taiwan Cider* series)

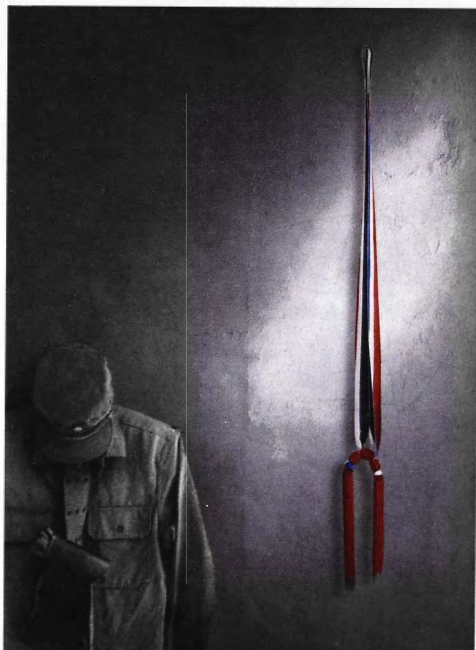


Figure 3.19: *Retirelessness*, 2009, ink-jet on paper (from the *Taiwan Cola* series)

CHAPTER FOUR

Narrating the Nation – YANG MAO-LIN

There are two important reference points here for me to begin to create the work... Through the land I am looking for my position and my identity as a Taiwanese. And through history and culture I can find today's Taiwan culture and position in the world.⁶⁰⁷

Yang Mao-lin (楊茂林) (b. 1953) is regarded as one of Taiwan's pioneering contemporary artists who played a key artistic role in the development of Taiwan's identity.⁶⁰⁸ As an artist who identified himself as a *Taiwanese* and, moreover, as a Taiwan independence supporter, Yang's art, during the 1990s, was underscored by a clear political agenda that was to promote democratisation and national identity consciousness. In contrast to Mei Dean-E and Wu Mali who studied overseas, worked in mixed media and had an international outlook, Yang was a locally-trained figurative painter with a perspective on identity issues that was comparably Taiwan-centred. Although he was not directly involved in politics, he used his art as a vehicle to oppose authoritarianism, and promote political reform and Taiwan independence. Ironically, with the rise of Taiwan nationalism, his expressions of anti-authoritarianism became increasingly popular in official art circles, and during the 1990s he was one of Taiwan's most widely exhibited artists.

This chapter focuses on the series, *Made in Taiwan* (1989-2001), Yang's most widely recognised work. Combining visual motifs, symbols, and text derived from a range of historical and contemporary sources, *Made in Taiwan* is a three-part visual narrative that chronicles and critiques the development of Taiwan's history and identity. Comprising over fifty paintings and spanning more than a decade, this was one of the most ambitious art projects

⁶⁰⁷ Yang Mao-lin, cited in Ian Findlay-Brown, 'Grand Vision and Identity', in *Inviting the Immortal: Culture, Intercourse, Tayouan History - Yang Mao-lin*, Lin & Keng Gallery, Taipei, 1999, p.20.

⁶⁰⁸ Larry D. Lutchmansingh, 'Yang Mao-lin - A Retrospective View', in *Yang Mao-lin 'Made in Taiwan'*, Galerie Pierre, Taichung, 1992, n.p; Findlay-Brown, 'Grand Vision', in *Inviting the Immortal*, 1999, p.18; Yang Wen-I, *Negotiating Traditions*, PhD, 2002, pp.71-87; Kuo, 'After the Empire', in *Modernity in Asian Art*, 1993, p.114.

undertaken by an artist in Taiwan during this period. In my view it reflects Yang's ideological and personal commitment to the "recovery" of Taiwan's nation-status, and it exemplifies the ways artists became active agents in the processes of identity formation. It is my contention this series was driven by a postcolonial desire to "re-claim" Taiwan's identity and re-awaken national consciousness; in Yang's words, 'to get back what belongs to us'.⁶⁰⁹ As an artist whose ancestors were from Mainland China, but who identifies as "Taiwanese", and claims to have indigenous blood, this series was as much a visual exploration of Taiwan's identity as it was a personal quest of self-discovery. It must be stated that, during the early-mid 1990s, it was both fashionable and politically correct to be a *benshengren* ("Taiwanese"), and particularly of Aboriginal descent; as distinct from being a *waishengren* (Mainlander). Artists were often at pains to prove their Taiwanese connections, and, to some extent, Yang's desire to demonstrate his Taiwanese identity must be viewed in this context. In the first part of this chapter examines Yang's upbringing as well as his political interests in the *tangwai* opposition movement, both of which had a significant bearing on his art practice. This is followed by an analysis of selected works from *Made in Taiwan*, particularly his 'history' and 'culture' chapters, which are his most well-known.

This chapter demonstrates how Yang set out on a mission to visually discover and define Taiwan's identity and engender a sense of national community. The nexus between the past and present, localism and internationalism, themes explored in Chapters One and Two, are re-visited in this chapter through the lens of Yang's art. While there is a relatively large body of literature about Yang's art, it is primarily descriptive or examines a specific body of work; and it does not, in any sustained or substantive manner, critically examine his art in relation to his role in Taiwan's national identity discourse. Based on a close

⁶⁰⁹ Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

analysis of selected artworks and information gleaned from interviews with the artist, along with some secondary sources, this chapter demonstrates the significant role Yang played in this identity discourse during the 1990s.

As this thesis argues, national identity is inherently fluid, changeable and pluralistic and, by the end of the 1990s Yang eventually abandoned his quest to define the essence of Taiwan's identity. In line with local and global art trends, by the beginning of the new millennium he turned his attention to broader cultural issues beyond the realm of the nation as discussed in the final part of this chapter.

A tale of self-discovery and nationhood

Yang's dual mission to become an artist and convey the 'spirit of the times'⁶¹⁰ was significantly influenced by his family history and by Taiwan's politics of identity. Born in the regional town of Changhua, in central Taiwan, Yang is fourth generation Taiwanese; seeking to emphasise his *Taiwanese*ness, the artist asserts he has Aboriginal ancestry.⁶¹¹ Yang's Taiwanese ethnicity is central to his identity as well as to his artistic quest to discover and define the Taiwan nation. During interviews he frequently recounts stories about his family, which he describes as politically left-leaning and embodying the 'spirit of resistance'.⁶¹² Yet, the artist recalls that despite his grandfather's anti-Japanese views, his own father, who had been educated during Japanese colonial rule, joined the Japanese Army against his grandfather's wishes. After returning to Taiwan his father was imprisoned by the KMT because they

⁶¹⁰ Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁶¹¹ In an interview Yang claims he is one-eighth aboriginal, although this cannot be substantiated. It is relevant to note that during this period of heightened Taiwanese nationalism many people in Taiwan were claiming aboriginal ancestry to prove their "Taiwanese" identity. Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

⁶¹² Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei. See also Yang Wen-I, *Negotiating Traditions*, PhD, 2002, p.87; Findlay-Brown, 'Grand Vision', in *Inviting the Immortal*, 1999, pp. 21, 23.

considered him pro-Japanese.⁶¹³ Members of his family were also involved in the 2/28 incident⁶¹⁴ and were labelled Communist 'bandit spies' (匪諜) by the KMT, and consequently had to 'keep a low profile'.⁶¹⁵ The artist emphasises that his family has had a considerable influence on him and his work:

the search for me began at home when I started listening to my grandfather arguing about politics when I was small. I wanted to find out why in my home there was such disagreement. From that and from the life around me, I found the direction I wanted to take in creativity.⁶¹⁶

Yang's story is of course not unique. From the late 1980s such individual accounts of political resistance and victimisation became widespread and were part of a broader narrative on Taiwan's identity, and its struggle for self-determination. In his discussion of the rise of Taiwanese cultural nationalism and the re-writing of history, Hsiao A-chin (蕭阿勤) states that, '...the entire history of the island [has been] represented as a history of colonisation and anti-colonialism, a history of persecution and resistance'.⁶¹⁷ It is my contention that Yang's works not only engaged with, but also reinforced and augmented these Taiwanese nationalist narratives by focusing on the idea that Taiwan's historical experience was unique and separate from China's.

Based on personal experience, the artist claims that, after nearly a century of Japanese and Chinese rule and subjugation, people's identities had become fragmented and that this had divided Taiwan society. This, he says, is exemplified through language:

We have all grown up under different circumstances. For example, my grandfather's generation spoke Han Chinese, which was [made] obsolete when the Japanese arrived; my father's generation spoke Japanese, which was [made] obsolete when the KMT arrived. When I went to school I learnt

⁶¹³ His father was stationed in Manila during WWII. It has also been noted that his grand-aunt was purportedly one of Taiwan's first female activists, and was involved in the 2/28 incident. For more information on Yang Mao-lin's background see Chen Fuyu, 楊茂林和他的時代 ('Yang Mao-lin and His Time'), 雄獅美術 (*Lion Art*), no. 253, March, pp.29-35 (in Chinese); Yang Wen-i, *Negotiating Traditions*, PhD, 2002, p.87.

⁶¹⁴ See Introduction p.15 and Chapter One p.83.

⁶¹⁵ Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁶¹⁶ Findlay-Brown, 'Grand Vision', in *Inviting the Immortal*, 1999, pp.20-21.

⁶¹⁷ Hsiao, *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism*, 2000, p.164.

Mandarin [and] I am waiting for the day when that will also become obsolete.⁶¹⁸

As Elie Kedourie famously stated, one of the central features of nationalism is the 'need to belong to a coherent, stable community',⁶¹⁹ and Yang emphasises the desire to belong, to 'close the gaps' and create a sense of national community:

There are gaps of identity between all three generations, which we have never been able to close. This is my family's problem, and it is also a historical issue in Taiwan...This gap is unquestionably an important driving force for me.⁶²⁰

As an art student, Yang was inspired and encouraged by the rise of the *tangwai* (黨外) (non-party, or 'outside the party' i.e. KMT) political opposition movement⁶²¹ that emerged in the mid-late 1970s when Taiwan had been de-recognised by the international community, and when the KMT's monopoly on power was challenged. As the political scientist Tien Hung-mao argues, the *tangwai* was led by Taiwanese pro-democracy activists, as distinct from Mainlanders who, until then, constituted the main voice of political opposition in Taiwan.⁶²² Comprising intellectuals, writers, politicians, and activists, the *tangwai* promoted democratisation and equal political participation, highlighting the inequalities between Taiwanese and Mainlanders, the latter of whom comprised the ruling KMT elite. These *tangwai* established the seminal *Mei li dao* (*Formosa*) journal,⁶²³ one of Taiwan's first openly radical political

⁶¹⁸ Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁶¹⁹ Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, Hutchinson, London, 1966 (1960), p.101

⁶²⁰ Ian Findlay-Brown, 'Coming to Terms with Change - Tsong Pu and Chen Hui-Chiao, *Asian Art News*, vol. 7, no. 1, Jan/Feb. 1997, pp.54-5.

⁶²¹ See Introduction p.22.

⁶²² These Mainlanders political activities were more China-centred and concentrated on democratisation, and unlike the *tangwai* they were not involved in electoral politics. The main hub for their political activities was the *Free China* journal that was established in 1949, and it published some political articles but they were more of a literary nature. Tien, *The Great Transition*, 1989, pp.95-96.

⁶²³ The *Formosa* journal was established in 1979 and promoted political reforms based on democratisation and freedom of speech. See Tien, *The Great Transition*, 1989, pp.96, 203; Bruce Jacobs, 'Political Opposition and Taiwan's Political Future', *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 6, July 1981, pp.21-40. Also see Edmondson, 'The February 28 Incident', in *Memories of the Future*, 2002, pp.32-33.

publications, which Yang frequently read as a student.⁶²⁴ During the mid-late 1970s, members from this group organised a series of mass rallies. The most famous of these was the 1979 Kaohsiung Incident (also known as the 'Formosa Incident' 美麗島事件) when protesters falsely labelled 'pro-communists', were beaten and imprisoned by the government in an attempt to suppress these activists.⁶²⁵ In the mid-1980s, proponents of this *tangwai* movement established the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which, after the lifting of martial law, officially became Taiwan's main opposition movement. The artist said this *tangwai* movement gave him hope as 'they [political activists] kept going [...] and I knew that one day something would happen and I'd be free'.⁶²⁶

After graduating from art school in 1979,⁶²⁷ Yang began his first politically-engaged paintings, entitled *Mythological Heroes* (1984-6) and *Graphic Heroes* (1986-7), which are imbued with the 'spirit of resistance' that had been instilled in him as a child.⁶²⁸ Created in the years during the lead-up to the lifting of martial law, these bold, neo-expressionist paintings are emotionally-charged, multi-layered and read as a visual allegory of Taiwan's political transformation from an authoritarian party state to a democracy. In art, allegory involves the use of visual symbolism to communicate a moral,

⁶²⁴ Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei. This journal was also referred to in Luo Xiu-zhi, 'A "Kingdom of Lilies" That's "Made in Taiwan" - An examination of Yang Mao-lin's works after 1984', in *Yang Mao-lin - Taoyuan Memorandum*, John R. Fadely (trans.), Galerie Pierre, Taipei, 1993, n.p.

⁶²⁵ The Kaohsiung Incident was initiated to celebrate International Human Rights Day. Another event in which members of the *tangwai* were involved and which turned into a violent confrontation was the Chungli incident in 1977. For more information on the Kaohsiung Incident and the rise of political opposition see, Tien, *The Great Transition*, 1989, pp.95-98; Jacobs, 'Political Opposition', *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 1981, pp.21-40; John F. Copper, 'Political Development in Taiwan', in *China and the Taiwan Issue*, Hungdah Chiu (ed.), Praeger, USA, 1979, p.63; Gold, *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle*, 1986, pp.114-6; John Kaplan, *The Court-Martial of the Kaohsiung Defendants*, Institute of East Asian Studies, Berkeley, 1981.

⁶²⁶ Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁶²⁷ Yang was a student in the Fine Arts Department at the China Culture University which was one of the only universities during this period that offered fine art courses. The other was the Taiwan Normal University but this was more teacher-based training.

⁶²⁸ For a more detailed description of *Graphic Heroes* see Jiang Hsun, 知性閱讀的知性質疑——閱讀楊茂林 ('Intellectual Questioning: Reading Yang Mao-lin'), 雄獅美術 (*Lion Art*), no.253, Mar. 1992, pp.21-25 (in Chinese).

religious or political message/idea and, as the art historian John Clark notes, in Asia it is one of the most popular 'rhetorical devices' used to represent the nation.⁶²⁹ In these works the artist, somewhat paradoxically, appropriates ancient *Chinese* myths and parables to reflect Taiwan's political situation and to visually communicate his ideological beliefs. According to the artist, most people in Taiwan had learnt these Chinese stories, many of which were parables, and he was not the only artist to draw upon them.⁶³⁰ At this point in time artists, such as Yang, did not necessarily view China in oppositional terms, as they later did when they became Taiwanese pro-independence supporters. In these paintings Yang re-casts immortal gods, such as Houyi (后羿) and Gun (鯀), who are perceived as rebellious outlaws, and transforms them into symbols of rebellion and resistance to oppression.⁶³¹ The artist explains, 'I wanted to make these tragic Chinese characters who were outlaws into modern political war-lords', and saviours of the oppressed.⁶³²

In *On the Spot of Murdering Kun* (1986) (fig. 4.1), which was part of the *Mythological Heroes* series, Yang re-tells the story of Gun (Kun), a half-God like figure who, according to legend, was executed after he failed to stop the disastrous 'Great Flood' (大洪水) of China.⁶³³ In this painting, which is infused with a sense of chaos, Gun is depicted as a faceless, flailing human figure surrounded by images of mythical creatures and mutant one-eyed figures wielding clubs against a blood red background. The artist has subversively inserted the KMT/ROC flag on the right hand (rather than left as is convention)

⁶²⁹ Clark, *Modern Asian Art*, 1998, pp.251-252.

⁶³⁰ For example, Wu Tien-chang's painting *A Symptom of the Syndromes of the World Injury II* (1986) is based on the Chinese myth of Hou-yi; and painter Kuo Jen-Chang (J.C Kuo), who was a contemporary of Yang's, created a work entitled *Day for Night I-I* (1992) which recounts the ancient Chinese myth of Kua Fu.

⁶³¹ Liu Pei-xiou, 鮮艷而帶刺的冠冕-訪楊茂林 ('A Bright Crown of Thorns'), 雄獅美術 (*Lion Art*), no. 253, March 1992, p.38 (in Chinese).

⁶³² Yang Mao-Lin, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei. Liu Pei-xiou, 'A Bright Crown', *Lion Art*, 1992, p.38 (in Chinese).

⁶³³ Some argue Gun committed suicide. For more information on Gun and the Great Flood of China see Lihui Yang (Yang Lihui) and An Deming, *Handbook of Chinese Mythology*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2005, p.74; Mark Edward Lewis, *The Flood Myths of Early China*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2006.

of the image; upon this flag a foot is firmly planted in what art historian Larry Lutchmansingh describes as an 'act of political vandalism'.⁶³⁴ Although Yang does not elaborate on the specific meaning of this painting, it can be argued that the juxtaposition of Gun and the KMT flag is a visual allegory of the failure of the KMT government to reform and gain the support of the Taiwanese people as Yang intimates:

At this time I was dissatisfied politically as the [KMT] government wasn't just controlling the people, but also their minds and everything. So the people had no freedom or rights. I wanted to use Chinese mythology to express my dissatisfaction.⁶³⁵

During the years leading up to the lifting of martial law in 1987, political discontent in Taiwan intensified. Emboldened by society's demands for democratisation and by the KMT's deteriorating political profile, the *tangwai* began to exert new pressure on the government to instigate reforms that would allow for broader political participation. A series of mass demonstrations and anti-government rallies was held and involved a wide range of civic organisations and public interest groups.⁶³⁶ In defiance of the KMT's one-party policy, the *tangwai* activists publicly declared the establishment of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) on 28 September 1986, only months later scoring twenty per cent of the popular vote in the parliamentary election.⁶³⁷ Unlike the artist Wu Mali, Yang did not personally

⁶³⁴ Lutchmansingh, in *Yang Mao-lin: Made in Taiwan*, 1992, p.10. Although this was illegal, particularly prior to the lifting of martial law Yang states he was never reprimanded, and the work was purchased by the government-run TFAM in 1986. Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

⁶³⁵ Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

⁶³⁶ Following the arrest of several opposition activists (including Chen Shui-bian who would later become the Taipei City Mayor and Taiwan's President), the *tangwai* organised a series of anti-government rallies throughout the island to raise awareness of the convicted dissidents. Although these rallies were strictly illegal, the KMT took no action and they were reportedly attended by tens of thousands of people. Parris H. Chang, 'The Changing Nature of Taiwan's Politics', in *Taiwan Beyond the Economic Miracle*, 1992, pp.30-31. It is worth bearing in mind that the end of the 1980s marked the end of the Cold War era, when the Berlin Wall was demolished and the Tiananmen massacre occurred and when anti-authoritarian pro-democracy movements were emerging around the world (eg. the Philippines, China and Hungary) - events which Yang and his fellow artists are likely to have been well aware.

⁶³⁷ Gary Klintworth (ed.), *Taiwan in the Asia-Pacific in the 1990s*, Allen & Unwin in association with the Northeast Asia Programme and Dept. of International Relations, Australian National University, St. Leonards, 1994, pp. 6-8; 53-4; Steve Chan and Cal Clark (eds.), *Flexibility*,

participate in this social movement,⁶³⁸ although his works during this period were undoubtedly redolent of a heightened sense of tension and discord.⁶³⁹ During interviews conducted with the artist, Yang was reticent to engage in party-politics, but clearly he opposed the old KMT regime, and promoted Taiwanese nationalism. He also strongly identified as Taiwanese (*benshengren*) whom he distinguished from the Mainlanders (*waishengren*) by rather derisively describing them as Taiwan's 'rootless minority'.⁶⁴⁰

After the lifting of martial law, increasing numbers of artists began openly to engage with political issues; as one artist observes, '... artists' political positions became more direct [as] they could more freely express their feelings.'⁶⁴¹ For Yang, the lifting of martial law heralded a new era, signifying the end of authoritarianism and cultural suppression, which engendered a new sense of 'place' for him in Taiwan:

After the lifting of martial law I felt very happy as I had the freedom to express my sentiments. I wanted to create works that represented Taiwan... I started to love this place... I thought it was important to show what you see on the streets and on TV about the government and the fighting.⁶⁴²

He abandoned Chinese myths and allegories on the basis that 'they were so far away... [and] based on places in China ... [which] were not part of everyday life and what was happening in Taiwan'.⁶⁴³ Hence, his works became recognisably Taiwan-centred and his expression more confident and direct. As the artist and Professor in Fine Arts, Chu Teh-I (曲德義) observes, the subjects of his

Foresight and Fortuna in Taiwan's Development: Navigating Between Scylla & Charybdis, Routledge, London, 1992, p.91.

⁶³⁸ This social movement sector is further discussed in Chapter Five.

⁶³⁹ Despite the fact his works demonstrate a strong political consciousness Yang is surprisingly reticent to discuss his political views and says he does not participate in political groups. He mentions the art critic Ni Tsai-chin approached him once to participate in a political/environmental group but he declined. Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

⁶⁴⁰ Yang Mao-lin, Interview with Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁶⁴¹ Tsong Pu, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁶⁴² Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 1995 and 2007

⁶⁴³ Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 2007 and 1995.

works were no longer tragic heroes from Chinese history, but rather ordinary people on the streets in Taiwan.⁶⁴⁴

In subsequent series of paintings, collectively titled *Behaviour and Game Playing* (1987-1988), the canvas is typically dominated by two enlarged figures locked in combat, and seemingly bursting out of the picture's frame. The artist draws attention to the force of encounter heightened through the use of cartoon graphics, flat primary colours and sharp outline, resembling works by American pop-artist Roy Lichtenstein's *Wham!* (1963) and *Explosion* (1965-6). In these paintings Yang uses a palette of predominantly green, yellow, blue and red, which, according to art historian Pan An-yi (潘安儀), signifies the DPP, the early independence movement, the KMT, and the Chinese Communists respectively.⁶⁴⁵ On an aesthetic level, Yang's bold, graphic painting style and subsequent use of slogans is also comparable to some Chinese Political Pop artists' works, especially Wang Guangyi's (王广义) highly stylized, heroic images, which explored socio-political issues. Although Yang does not confirm or deny this association, he would undoubtedly have been aware of his Chinese peers.⁶⁴⁶ In 2007 several works from Yang's *Behaviour and Game Playing* series were displayed alongside works by Wang Guangyi and Yu Youhan (余友涵) in *Post Martial Law vs. Post-'89: The Contemporary Art in Taiwan and China*, an exhibition presented at the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, which is discussed in Chapter Eight.

⁶⁴⁴ Chu Teh-I, 傳說中的「圖像英雄」—楊茂林的台灣史性格中的「英雄圖像」(The Legendary "Iconic Hero"—Hero Images of Taiwan History by Yang Mao-lin), 雄獅美術 (*Lion Art*), no. 253, 1992, pp.26-28 (in Chinese).

⁶⁴⁵ An-yi Pan (Pan An-yi), 'Contemporary Taiwanese Art in the Era of Contention', in *Contemporary Taiwanese Art in the Era of Contention*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 2004, p.87.

⁶⁴⁶ In 1989, an exhibition of works by some of China's most contemporary artists featured in *The Stars 10 Years* presented by Hanart Gallery (Taipei). It included works by Huang Rui, Ma Desheng, Wang Keping, Qu Leilei, Li Yongcun, Zhong Ahcheng, Li Yan, Li Shuang, Mao Lizi, Yang Yiping, Shao Fei. In 1993 the same gallery presented several paintings by these Chinese Political Pop artists featured in the exhibition *New Art from China: Post-1989* (see Chapter Eight p.394.)

In *Behaviour and Game Playing – Fighting Section – I, III, IV* (1987) (fig. 4.2), two colossal figures with massive muscles and clenched fists are represented in a violent struggle. These works are a visual metaphor of the turmoil and confusion that developed during this period of political transformation, when the DPP contested the KMT, and when the social movement sector became increasingly vocal and powerful. The Chinese art critic Li Xianting (栗宪庭) perceptively observes ‘the deep-seated sense of powerlessness’ expressed in the earlier series disappeared and the ‘struggle took on a heroic feeling’.⁶⁴⁷ Li compares these works and their bold figures to the revolutionary posters produced in Russia and China,⁶⁴⁸ and certainly these works do reflect a heroic, even superhuman, and monumental quality. Yang has also clearly been influenced, ideologically and artistically, by the revolutionary mural paintings of Mexican artist, Diego Rivera (1886-1957), who, along with David Siqueiros (1896-1974) and Jose Clemente Orozco (1883-1949), established the Mexican mural movement. These Mexican muralists’ paintings, which typically addressed local socio-political issues relating to class struggle, freedom and identity, were a source of inspiration for other artists in Asia, and notably in China during the mid-1950s.⁶⁴⁹

In the *Behaviour and Game Playing* series in particular, Yang directly challenges the authority of the state, and the KMT government specifically, in

⁶⁴⁷ Li Xianting, ‘Reconstructing Local Culture Amid Globalization: Situating Ourselves to Understanding the Meaning of Yang Mao-lin’s Art’, in *Inviting the Immortals – Culture-Intercourse-Tayouan History*, Lin & Keng Gallery, Taipei, 1999, p.9.

⁶⁴⁸ Li, ‘Reconstructing Local Culture’, in *Inviting the Immortals*, 1999, p.10.

⁶⁴⁹ Although research is ongoing, it has been noted that during the mid-1950s two exhibitions of Mexican painting and prints travelled to Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou; and there were several artistic exchanges. Zheng Shengtian who is the Managing Editor of *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese art* is undertaking a major research project on the development of artistic exchanges between Mexico and China in the 1950s. For more information see <http://haudenschildgarage.com/532/supported-program-mexicochina-exchange-in-the-1950s.htm#future-plans> (accessed 25/6/2012). On the influence of Mexican art in Asia more generally see Alison Carroll, ‘East and West? A Different Story: the Impact of Mexico on 20th Century Asian Art’, *Art Monthly Australia*, no. 213, Sept. 2008, pp.11-16. For a discussion on Diego Rivera and the Mexican muralist painting tradition and their roles in nationalism and ‘indigenism’ see Shifra M. Goldman, *Contemporary Mexican Painting in a Time of Change*, University of New Mexico Press, 1995.

ways some local art critics argue was unprecedented.⁶⁵⁰ Former journalist turned art critic and curator Hu Yung-fen (胡永芬), for example, describes Yang as a pioneer stating '[he] is the first and [...] the only contemporary Taiwanese artist who unleashed frontal critiques of the political authorities through art';⁶⁵¹ Jiang Hsun (蔣勳) declares that he had never before seen an artist engaging so directly with politics.⁶⁵² While Yang may well have been one of Taiwan's more conspicuous painters of political subjects, there were other artists, including Wu Tien-chang (吳天章), whose works are equally politically-charged though not always so explicitly.⁶⁵³ During the 1980s Yang had a close association with Wu, a fellow graduate from the Chinese Culture University.⁶⁵⁴ Both were painters and influenced by the emotive and symbolic works of the Italian Transavantgarde neo-expressionist movement, particularly the works of Sandro Chia (1946-) and Francesco Clemente (1952-).⁶⁵⁵ In addition to these shared artistic interests, both Yang and Wu identified as *Taiwanese*⁶⁵⁶ and were politically left-leaning, believing art served a purpose, which, during

⁶⁵⁰ Huang Hai-ming, 作為一種兼具反映及批判的藝術—試談楊茂林的作品 ('Art as Reflection and Critique: A Comment on the Work of Yang Mao-lin'), 當代 (*Contemporary*), no. 57, Jan, 1991, p.80 (in Chinese); Jiang Hsun, 'Intellectual Questioning', 雄獅美術 (*Lion Art*), p.21 (in Chinese).

⁶⁵¹ Hu Yung-fen, *Post-Martial Law vs. Post-'89: The Contemporary Art in Taiwan and China*, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung, 2007, p.60. Another art critic, Jiang Hsun states that such a 'positive interaction between art and the political and social trends has never been seen before.' See Jiang Hsun, 'Intellectual Questioning', *Lion Art*, 1992, p.21 (in Chinese).

⁶⁵² Jiang Hsun, 'Intellectual Questioning', *Lion Art*, 1992, p.21 (in Chinese).

⁶⁵³ In relation to Wu Tien-chang's series *Four Eras* (1989-1990) Ni Tsai-chin claims Wu was 'the first artist to break the political taboo', Ni Tsai-chin, 吳天章的歷史圖像 ('Wu Tien-chang's Historical Icons'), in 藝術家台灣美術細說從頭二十年 (*Taiwan Art: Looking Back on Twenty Years of History*), 藝術家出版社 (Artist Publishing), Taipei, 1995, p.156 (in Chinese).

⁶⁵⁴ Yang and Wu are still close associates, and both belong to a new art group they have established called *Hantu she*.

⁶⁵⁵ Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author 1995, Taipei. These influences are also discussed in Yang Wen-i, *Negotiating Traditions*, PhD, 2002, p.83; and Yang also discusses the influence of the Italian Transavantgarde on his work in Lin Yu-xiang, 台灣烏托邦圖象的新品牌—訪楊茂林 ('Utopian Image of the New Brand in Taiwan-Interviewing Yang Mao-lin'), 雄獅美術 (*Lion Art*), no.258, pp. 60-62 (in Chinese).

⁶⁵⁶ Wu remarks at art school he 'struggled with the idea of being "Chinese"', and that wasn't until the 1980s he began to differentiate himself as 'Taiwanese'. Wu Tien-chang, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

an interview, Wu said was to capture Taiwan's 'political and social ills'.⁶⁵⁷ For Yang, 'the concept of "an art for art" is not practical. What I care about is the concern with people, society, and environment.'⁶⁵⁸

In 1982, Yang, Wu and another two artists, Lu Yi-chung (盧怡仲) and Yeh Tzi-chi (葉子奇),⁶⁵⁹ also graduates from the Chinese Culture University, co-founded the '101 Modern Art Group' (一〇一現代藝術群).⁶⁶⁰ According to John Clark, the difference between the 101 Art Group and earlier modernist art groups, such as the *Tung-fang* (Eastern) and *Wu Yue* (Fifth Moon), was that the 101 artists were figurative rather than abstract artists, and they focused on representing Taiwan, its people, landscape and culture.⁶⁶¹ In subsequent years, several other painters who were also trained in Taiwan, including Lu Hsien-ming (陸先銘), Lien Chien-hsing (連建興) and Kuo Wei-kuo (郭維國) joined this group, which, in 1985, became known as the 'Taipei Art Group' (or the 'Taipei Painting Group' 台北畫派).⁶⁶² These artists were all painters and were

⁶⁵⁷ Wu Tien-chang, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei. These artists' views on the purpose of art were reinforced in the 101 Art Group's eight-point manifesto in which one of the first points was 'We accept that art is not an occupation but a fate'. (一〇一現代藝術群) (101 Modern Art Group), 一〇一」的十年一創作、運動、企圖心 ('Ten Years of "101"—Creation, Movement, Ambition'), 雄獅美術 (*Lion Art*), no. 243, 1991, pp. 193-195 (in Chinese).
⁶⁵⁸ Yang Mao-lin, *Contemporary Art Trends in the Republic of China 1988*, TFAM, Taipei, 1988, p.80.

⁶⁵⁹ In 1984 Yeh withdrew from the group to undertake studies overseas.

⁶⁶⁰ In an interview, Yang states that "101" means 'one of a kind'. It is a term used by financially deprived people especially, but it is also about wanting to be the best' (Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei). The eight-point manifesto was (to paraphrase): '...Artists can't release themselves from the tangle of life and history (point 1). We accept that art is not an occupation but a fate (2). We want to capture the Taiwan spirit but...all we can do is reflect our feelings, roots and concerns in our work. We all agree that we have to clarify the Taiwan phenomena before exploring the Taiwan spirit. We can only confirm the present by reviewing (the past) (3-6). Taiwan people were born and grew up here. They are aware of Taiwan's turbulent history (7). Taiwan spirit is the root of life. Through our art we will find dignity, because we were born and raised here (8)'. 101 Modern Art Group, 'Ten years of "101"', *Lion Art*, 1991, pp.193-195 (in Chinese). For further information on this group, its influences, and objectives see Lu, I-chung, Yang Mao-lin, Wu Tien-chang. (盧怡仲、楊茂林、吳天章). 本土新藝術的出發 ('The Start of New Local art'), 藝術家 (*Artist*), no. 115, 1984, pp.287-288 (in Chinese).

⁶⁶¹ John Clark, 'Aspects of Taipei Modernism in the 1980s', *Orientations*, vol. 23, no. 7, July 1992, p.33.

⁶⁶² In 1998, members who remained part of this group re-named it the Hantoo Art Group.

committed to engaging in socio-political issues and raising local consciousness. They rejected conceptual art and abstraction, which they considered too far removed from politics and society and inaccessible to the general public as reflected in their manifesto:

... "Confidence", "radicalism" and "localism" have [helped] shaped Taiwan's urban character. The Taipei Art Group...is a group of artists...who critically reflect on the human state [in reference to] politics, society, culture and history. The [artists in the] Taipei Art Group emphasise the "city character" and the "grassroots" which symbolizes the new era of "Taiwan consciousness" ...⁶⁶³

On an ideological level, these artists' Taiwan-centred approach could be compared with the 1970s Homeland (*hsiang-tu*) movement, when local painters including Hsi Te-chin (席德進)⁶⁶⁴ and Hong Tong (洪通), as well as the sculptor Ju Ming, called attention to Taiwan's 'grassroots' or 'native soil' and its local traditions.⁶⁶⁵ However, for these *hsiang-tu* artists, the 'grassroots' was synonymous with Taiwan's countryside, and their images focused on rural scenes, peasants, and farmers, inspired by their traditional folk customs.⁶⁶⁶ In contrast, the Taipei Art Group found inspiration in the city and in Taiwan's stark industrial landscapes that grew out of Taiwan's 'Economic Miracle'. Wu Tien-chang explained that the *hsiang-tu* painting movement was essentially 'anti-modern' and anti-Western,⁶⁶⁷ whereas the Taipei Art Group embraced

⁶⁶³ Lu Yi-Zhong, 草莽的精緻 ('The Refined Grass-Roots') Taiwan Gallery, Taipei, 1992, n.p (in Chinese).

⁶⁶⁴ Also known as Shiy De-Jinn and Xi Dejin.

⁶⁶⁵ On Hong Tong and Ju Ming see Introduction p.27.

⁶⁶⁶ As mentioned in the Introduction, the *hsiang-tu* literature movement was comparatively more political than the art movement in emphasising its critical and social function. Writers sought to draw attention to the effects of urban development in rural areas, and on the downtrodden and marginalised lower-strata of Taiwanese peasants who mainly lived in these regions. For more on the *hsiang-tu* literature and art movement see Wang Jing, "Taiwan *Hsiang-tu* Literature: Perspectives on the Evolution of a Literary Movement", in *Chinese Fiction from Taiwan: Critical Perspectives*, Jeanette L. Faurot (ed.), Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1980; Yee, 'Constructing a Native Consciousness', *China Quarterly*, 2001, pp.83-101; Lu Ching-Fu, 'An Examination of Regionalism and Contemporary Trends in Art', in *Symposium of Artistic Trends*, 1992.

⁶⁶⁷ The nativist *hsiang-tu* art movement is often regarded anti-Western but it is also acknowledged that Western painters such as the American super-realist painter Andrew Wyeth inspired many local painters. Ni Tsai-chin, 藝術家台灣美術細說從頭二十年 (*Taiwan Art: Looking Back on Twenty Years of History*), 1995, p.11(in Chinese).

modernisation and acknowledged Taiwan's cultural diversity and were also more politically-engaged.⁶⁶⁸ When asked about his views on the *hsiang-tu* movement, Yang noted that

Hsiang-tu didn't influence me much. It was too influenced by China, even though it represented Taiwan's countryside. I grew up in the country and I wasn't interested in it or in China. When I went to Taipei I saw all these industrial factories and urban architecture, with stainless steel and elevators - things were changing - it was like a landscape of mirrors and I fell in love with it.⁶⁶⁹

Yang and his contemporaries' perceptions of Taiwan signify a critical shift in the ways the island was imagined. It was no longer viewed in nostalgic or agrarian terms, but rather as a modern metropolis that had become known internationally as one of the leading 'Newly Industrialised Countries' (NIC) in the Asian region.⁶⁷⁰ The 'Economic Miracle' transformed Taiwan's physical landscape and gave rise to an upwardly mobile urban middle class enjoying significantly better living standards.⁶⁷¹ During the 1980s, a 'get rich quick' attitude prevailed as individualism replaced collectivism, and personal success, security and status became a focus of interest. A new breed of private entrepreneurs emerged, which one political commentator describes as a new 'sub-ethnic elite',⁶⁷² who had been born in Taiwan and accumulated significant wealth. This private capital was channelled into private investments and activities outside the control of the state, such as in the escalating stock market, the notorious gambling houses, as well as into Taiwan's burgeoning art market, which became increasingly investment-oriented. According to one

⁶⁶⁸ Wu Tien-chang, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei. Wu emphasises that this distinction between the *hsiang-tu* and *bentu* are movements is important when exploring Taiwan identity issues in art.

⁶⁶⁹ Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 2007 and 1995.

⁶⁷⁰ This view was shared by members of the group but it was most clearly visually expressed in Lu Hsien-ming's paintings of stark, industrialized city scenes, buildings and highways.

⁶⁷¹ For further information on Taiwan's economic rise during the 1980s see Tien, *The Great Transition*, 1989, pp.17-42; Steve Chan and Cal Clark (eds.), 'The Other Long March' in *Flexibility, Foresight and Fortuna*, 1992, p.90; Christopher Howe, 'The Taiwan Economy: the Transition to Maturity and the Political Economy of its Changing International Status', in *Contemporary Taiwan*, David Shambaugh (ed.), *The China Quarterly*, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp.127-151.

⁶⁷² Gold, 'Civil Society and Taiwan's Quest', in *Cultural Change in Postwar Taiwan*, 1994, p.52.

artist, '[by the late 1980s,] the art market was like a real estate market, which was dominated by business tycoons who would often buy whole exhibitions of works'.⁶⁷³

With the rise of Taiwan identity consciousness, and the popularity of things *Taiwanese*, works by members of Taipei Art Group, and particularly those by Yang and Wu, became increasingly visible and collectable during the mid-late 1980s and early 1990s. As early as 1983 members from the 101 Group held an exhibition at the American Cultural Center, one of the few venues that exhibited local contemporary art during this time; and in 1984 and 1985, soon after the TFAM opened, Yang's work featured alongside works by the Taipei Art Group in two painting exhibitions.⁶⁷⁴ In 1987 Yang and Wu were the first contemporary emerging artists from Taiwan to present their works at the TFAM.⁶⁷⁵ Yang's exhibition, *Behaviour and Game Playing*, opened three months after the lifting of martial law in October 1987; and three years later in 1990 the TFAM held another solo exhibition of Yang's where he presented his *Made in Taiwan* series. According to the artist, audiences responded positively to his works in these exhibitions, because, he says, they were 'easy to understand', and expressed a sense of *bentuhua* (Taiwan consciousness).⁶⁷⁶ Here, Yang is clearly making a distinction between himself as a local figurative painter, and artists who trained overseas and whose conceptual works were often regarded by local artists and critics as too Western and inaccessible to a broad audience.

⁶⁷³ Tsong Pu, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei. The growth of the art market is further discussed in Chapter Five in relation to the lifting of martial law and Hsiao Chong-ray's article 'Changes in the Subject Matter' in *Symposium on "The Artistic Trends in the R.O.C"*, 1992, pp.145-185 (in Chinese with an English summary).

⁶⁷⁴ These include *The First Modern Painting Group Exhibition in the ROC* (1984) and *New Painting Exhibition* (1985) the latter of which was an application-based exhibition by the Taipei Art Group. Another group exhibition by the Taipei Art Group was held in 1989. See *TFAM Exhibition Review 1983-2008*, 2008, pp.219-223.

⁶⁷⁵ Prior to 1987, the TFAM held several retrospectives of older artists' works (eg. Li Mei-shu, Shi Te-chin, Kuo Po-chuan, and Lee Chun-shan) but amongst the application-based exhibitions most were larger group exhibitions or were more traditional calligraphy or ink painting exhibitions. See *TFAM Exhibition Review 1983-2008*, 2008, pp.219-223.

⁶⁷⁶ Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

During the 1990s Yang's works were selected for most major exhibitions presented by public art museums in Taiwan, including *Taiwan Art 1945-1993* (1993), *Quest for Identity* (1996) and *Visions of Pluralism* (1999) (see Chapters One and Eight). His works were also included in several international exhibitions of Taiwan art held in Korea, Japan and San Francisco, and Sydney.⁶⁷⁷ Notably, however, he has not yet been selected to represent Taiwan officially in the Venice Biennale and it can only be surmised that the TFAM's nominated judges have not considered his work sufficiently 'international' or accessible to a culturally diverse audience. However, his work has featured in three independently-organised exhibitions held in conjunction with the Venice Biennale.⁶⁷⁸ Focusing on Yang's recent quasi-religious, sexualised Superhero series of sculptures, the art historian, Felix Schöeber, who was one of the curators of these exhibitions, argues that Yang's work has global relevance since it engages in secular issues and reflects the anxieties and instabilities of our contemporary world.⁶⁷⁹

In Taiwan, Oliver Ye (葉忠訓) was an important patron to Yang Mao-lin and, with Yang's assistance, established the Taiwan Gallery (台灣泥雅畫廊) to present contemporary Taiwanese art.⁶⁸⁰ Ye observes that in the late 1980s

⁶⁷⁷ International exhibitions held during the 1980s which featured Yang's works included *The Chinese Contemporary Painting Show* (San Francisco, 1987); *The Chinese Contemporary Arts Exhibition* (Korea, 1987); and *Message from Taipei* (Japan, 1989). During the 1990s, his work featured in *Art Taiwan* (Sydney, 1995), and *Visions of Pluralism* (Beijing, 1999).

⁶⁷⁸ Yang's work has featured in three subsidiary group exhibitions presented at Venice. These include: *VOC: Handle with Care*, a group exhibition curated by Yang Wen-i in 1999; a solo exhibition entitled *Temple of Sublime Beauty* (2009) curated by Felix Schöeber and co-organised by MoCA Taipei (where the exhibition was subsequently shown) and Lin & Keng Gallery; and *Future Pass- From Asia to the World* (2011) a group exhibition co-curated by Schöeber, Victoria Lu and Renzo Di Renzo.

⁶⁷⁹ Yang Mao-lin, 'Revisiting the Pure Land of Maha', in *Kill Alice-Final Battle: Yang Mao-lin*, Tina Keng Gallery, Taipei, 2011, p.69.

⁶⁷⁹ Felix Schöeber, 'Secular Liminalities', in *Temple of Sublime Beauty*, Lin & Keng Gallery, 2009, pp.9-11.

⁶⁸⁰ Ye began collecting art in 1989, and he says at this time he knew little about art, and Yang advised him on which artists he should collect and present in his gallery and he introduced many artists to Ye. Oliver Ye, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei. On Ye and the reasons he closed the gallery, see Chapter Two p.115. Amongst the few galleries representing local art, Ye mentions Eslite Gallery who he says showed 'American-educated Taiwanese painters' and

most people were buying 'foreign artists or dead Taiwan artists' works', which he considered too expensive. He was more interested in supporting younger artists 'who live in Taiwan, who share the same experiences, and breathe the same dirty air'.⁶⁸¹ According to Ye, when he opened Taiwania Gallery in late 1991 there were few galleries representing younger local artists' works. However, within three months of establishing his gallery, more than ten other commercial galleries representing contemporary Taiwan art opened, and unable to compete, Ye closed his gallery after one year.⁶⁸²

As discussed in previous chapters, in the local art market there was a preference for *Taiwanese* art, including works by Japanese-trained local artists from the 1930s, and for contemporary figurative painting that engaged in local socio-political themes.⁶⁸³ Some gallery dealers questioned the narrow definitions and distinctions made between *bentu* (Taiwanese) and 'international' art, and expressed scepticism regarding the motives of some artists and critics who promoted *bentu*.⁶⁸⁴ Nevertheless, my research suggests that there was general consensus among gallery dealers, curators, and art magazine editors that there was a noticeable upsurge of interest in Taiwan art in the art market from the mid-late 1980s until the early-mid 1990s when the demand for socio-politically engaged Taiwan art began to diminish with the decline of Taiwan nationalism and the rise of internationalism (see Chapter Two). Hsieh Su-chen (謝素貞), who was then managing the Taiwan Gallery,

Hanart Gallery whose Hong Kong-based owner, Johnson Chang (Chang Tsong-zung), had an 'English taste for Chinese art' (for further information on Chang see Chapter Eight). Taiwania was located in a vacant building next door to Ye's family house in a prestigious area near the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall. Oliver Ye, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁶⁸¹ Oliver Ye, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁶⁸² Taiwania Gallery presented ten solo shows and two group exhibitions during this one year period.

⁶⁸³ See Chapter One p.66 and Chapter Two pp.113-114.

⁶⁸⁴ The managers of Eslite (Cheng Pin) and Longmen galleries which showed modern and contemporary local and international art both raised questions about distinctions drawn between what was considered *bentu* and *international*. Lee Yali who managed the Longmen Gallery described the definitions of *bentu* as too 'narrow' and that the differences between artists who studied in Taiwan and those who went overseas are not as significant as critics such as Ni Tsai-chin maintained. Zhou Li and Lee Yali, Interviews with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

was a keen supporter of Taiwan art, and she articulated her rationale as follows:

My father was born on the Mainland, but my mother and I were born in Taiwan. I want to show the best of Taiwan art for Taiwanese people. I want to set up a museum that would be built in a Taiwanese style and show Taiwanese works. Many companies earn money from Taiwan, but they don't give anything back, [and show] only Western masters' works. I don't want that, I just want Taiwanese.⁶⁸⁵

In the art media critics and *bentuhua* advocates, including Ni Tsai-chin (倪再沁) and Lin Hsing-yue (林惺嶽), who were also painters of local themes, praised artists such as Yang, and the 'new expressionism' (新表現主義) of the Taipei Art Group whose works were perceived to exhibit a sense of Taiwan consciousness (*bentu yishi*).⁶⁸⁶ As discussed in Chapters One and Two, in Ni's seminal article, *Western Art Made in Taiwan* (1991), works by Yang and other locally-trained socio-politically engaged figurative painters, were pitted against works by artists from Taiwan who had been trained overseas and whom Ni labelled 'Western' or 'foreign' because they were conceptually-oriented (and therefore regarded as inaccessible to a general audience), used 'Western' materials and forms, and were believed to be derivative.⁶⁸⁷ Mei Dean-E and Wu Mali, who were amongst the overseas-trained artists Ni criticised, strongly rejected this claim.⁶⁸⁸ However, when Yang was questioned about his views on this local/foreign distinction, he was more circumspect and, although he did not endorse Ni's criticisms, his position is clear:

In the 80s there were lots of overseas-trained artists coming back to Taiwan. That created conflict between us. At that time we were going towards the path of being nationalised and local students were sensitive to what was going on and they know more about Taiwan than foreign students who mostly did

⁶⁸⁵ Hsieh Su-chen, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁶⁸⁶ Ni, 'Western Art Made in Taiwan', in *Taiwan Consciousness*, 1994, pp.72-74 (in Chinese); Lin Hsing-yue, 美術本土化的釋疑及申論 ('Clarification and Debate about the Localisation of Art'), 雄獅美術 (*Lion Art*), no. 264, Feb. 1993, pp. 94-107 (in Chinese); and Lin Hsing-yue, 'Setting the Historical Stage for the Taiwan Art Exhibition, in *Taiwan Art 1945-1993*, 1993, p.48

⁶⁸⁷ Ni, 'Western Art Made in Taiwan', in *Taiwan Consciousness*, 1994, pp.37-88 (in Chinese).

⁶⁸⁸ For further information on Ni's article see Chapter One (pp.72-73) and Chapter Three (pp.158) and Chapter Five (p.259) for Wu's responses to Ni's article.

installation art and had been influenced by the West. They had developed new eyes.⁶⁸⁹

Yang believed that the 'nationalisation' or Taiwanisation of Taiwan was of critical importance to Taiwan's future and, as a *Taiwanese* artist, he believed it was his duty to assist in this process. It is my contention that the *Made in Taiwan* series, which developed over a period of twelve years, demonstrates Yang's enduring commitment to Taiwanisation.

Made in Taiwan- an unfolding identity narrative

The role of narrative is central to *Made in Taiwan* and this section explores the ways the artist combined narrative, allegory and symbolism, visually to re-interpret Taiwan's history in this series. As scholars have widely acknowledged, narrative plays a critical role in the processes of identity formation.⁶⁹⁰ Telling stories, whether through words or images, enables us to relate to one another, define ourselves, and make sense of the world around us. Narrative is an inter-relational form of knowledge production and exchange and, as David Herman observes, it is also 'a basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process, and change'.⁶⁹¹ Narrative is a process of (re-) invention, mediating between fact and fiction, and it assigns meaning to and confers legitimacy on human experience and events. Drawing on these interpretative, relational, and legitimising aspects, I argue that this series was as much inspired by the artist's desire to engender a sense of national community, and establish Taiwan's 'national' status in the world, as it was by his own search for self-identity.

Made in Taiwan comprises a vast number of paintings, all of which focus on Taiwan, and which can loosely be divided into three main themes or chapters

⁶⁸⁹ Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

⁶⁹⁰ Monika Fludernik, 'Identity/alterity', in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, David Herman (ed.), Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp.274-283; Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, K. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (trans.), vol. 3 University of Chicago Press, 1985, 1988.

⁶⁹¹ David Herman, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, 2007, p.3.

(in order): contemporary society and politics; Taiwan's history; and contemporary culture and identity. Each of these themes addresses three key questions: 'who am I?', 'where have we come from?', and 'what defines our culture?' Given the sheer volume of works, this discussion focuses on a selection of works from the second and third chapters in the series, and on some of their key conceptual concerns and visual elements recurring throughout the series.

Briefly, the first chapter in this series, which explores the nexus between society and politics, comprises two sections entitled *Limbs-Trunks Sign Section* and *Slogan Section*. While the *Limbs-Trunks Sign Section* is remarkably similar, conceptually and aesthetically,⁶⁹² to his earlier *Behaviour and Game Playing* series, in the *Slogan* series (標語篇) the artist takes a different approach. Having rejected the Chinese mythological legends that informed his earlier works, instead Yang draws from ancient Western proverbs, and specifically from Aesop's Fables, to explore the relationship between government and society, authority and power, truth and deception.⁶⁹³ In *Slogan Section VI* (1990), (fig. 4.3) the artist has inserted an oversized carrot bearing the Chinese characters *bi sheng* (必勝), which could be translated as 'victory at all costs' and, in this context, refers to Taiwan's processes of democratisation.⁶⁹⁴ The carrot is represented against a background of raised arms and clenched fists; and this inner, diamond-shaped image is framed by four donkeys' heads depicted in each corner of the picture. Here, the artist is alluding to the famous Aesop fable about the donkey (signifying, in this context, the government) who

⁶⁹² These similarities are most apparent when comparing the works *Behaviour Game Playing-Fighting Section IV* (1987) and *Made in Taiwan-Limbs-Trunk-Sign section IV* (1990).

⁶⁹³ In the mid-1980s, a version of Aesop tales were shown in a Chinese children's television programme in Taiwan. According to one report, a selection of Aesop Fables (*Yishi Yuyan* 意拾喻言) were first translated into Chinese from the seventeenth century, but were later regarded 'anti-authoritarian' and the book was banned. See Tao Ching Sin, 'A Critical Study of Yishi Yuyan', M.Phil thesis, University of Hong Kong, 2007.

⁶⁹⁴ In Taiwan, this phrase is commonly associated with Japanese kamikaze pilots who died on the front line and wore a bandana bearing these words. However, during the early 1990s it was also a phrase popularly used in Taiwan's political sphere and was also used to distinguish between Japanese cultural influence and Chinese culture.

was coaxed by its master (society, signified by the clenched fists) to keep running to catch up with the carrot (reform/progress) held just beyond its reach. This work can be understood as a political allegory on the inability of the government to keep up with demands in society for change.

In these and subsequent works in this series the artist adopts, for the first time, the dual-frame diptych format. As a compositional device, the diptych enables the artist to juxtapose and combine two different concepts into a single narrative and imbue them with new meaning. The dual-frame serves to distance the artist and viewer from the action/confrontation, creating a space for critical reflection. In the bottom inner-frame of each painting, the artist stamps the stencilled text 'Made in Taiwan'. During the 1980s, this phrase was synonymous with the so-called 'Economic Miracle' and with Taiwan's emergence on the world-stage as a key manufacturer and exporter of industrial and consumer products made in Taiwan. As Pan An-yi and Li Xianting point out, in Taiwan this slogan has a dual meaning: it implies national progress and international recognition, and it also 'brands' Taiwan as an exporter of cheap and often inferior products.⁶⁹⁵ In this series this once omnipresent trademark is used not to celebrate Taiwan's economic success, but rather to examine and critique the meaning and development of Taiwan's identity and culture.⁶⁹⁶ Yang points out that

In my deep search for what symbols or signs could represent this land, I found "Made in Taiwan" the most suitable...The reason why I put this into my work is that it simultaneously implies self-confidence and self-irony. "Made in

⁶⁹⁵ An-yi Pan (Pan An-yi), 'Contemporary Taiwanese Art in the Era of Contention', in *Contemporary Taiwanese Art in the Era of Contention*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 2004, p.87. According to Li Xianting, Yang was distressed when he saw that, in one of the *Toy Story* movies, Taiwan was referred to as a country that produced second-grade goods Li Xianting, 'Reconstructing Local Culture', in *Inviting the Immortals*, 1999, p.10.

⁶⁹⁶ Wang Fu-dong says that by employing the label 'Made in Taiwan' Yang is effectively establishing his own brand in which art becomes a commodity and commercial enterprise. Wang Fu-dong, 好漢闖好漢，英雄搶英雄—楊茂林和他的製造業 ('Heroes Fight Heroes: Yang Mao-lin and his Manufacturing'), 雄獅美術 (*Lion Art*), no. 251, 1992, pp.144-145 (in Chinese).

Taiwan” conveys the impression of the second-best, ordinary, even the imitated (sic).⁶⁹⁷

As Jason C. Kuo observes, there has been significant scholarly and media interest in Taiwan’s economic growth, but there has been relatively little attention given to Taiwan’s culture and art, contributing to the perception that Taiwan might be ‘an “Economic Miracle” without culture’.⁶⁹⁸ Seeking to challenge this perception, Yang sets out on a mission to discover and define the distinctiveness of Taiwan’s history and culture, to instil a sense of identity consciousness and national pride in the people in Taiwan. In the second chapter of *Made in Taiwan*, the artist visually traces Taiwan’s historical trajectory over a period of more than four centuries, from prehistoric times to foreign occupation. Yang’s shift from the drama of contemporary politics towards history corresponded with the popular rise of Taiwanese cultural nationalism, when there was a widespread desire to reconnect with and preserve Taiwan’s history and heritage. During the early-mid 1990s there was an upsurge of interest in Taiwan’s history, characterised as a ‘Taiwan Studies Fever’; as demonstrated in Chapter One, this had a significant impact on the art field. Seeking to respond to the ‘spirit of the times’ Yang outlines his rationale:

At that time I wanted to engage with local issues. A lot of people had different opinions about Taiwan’s history. I wanted to let people know what I think and express my sense of nationalism through my work. I wanted to use painting to re-write Taiwan’s history.⁶⁹⁹

In the first two sections of this series, entitled *Yun Mountain Memorandum* (1991-2) and *Lily Memorandum* (1993-4), the artist visually unearths the geographical, ecological and genealogical origins of Taiwan and its people. Drawing on a repository of myth, historical account and memory, these works evoke a certain primordial quality, in which the past is viewed in Arcadian terms as the epitome of simplicity, order and coherence. As Anthony D. Smith

⁶⁹⁷ Liu Pei-xiou, ‘A Bright Crown’, *Lion Art*, 1992, p.39 (in Chinese).

⁶⁹⁸ Jason C. Kuo, *Art and Cultural Politics in Postwar Taiwan*, 2000, p.2. According to the Chinese art critic Li Xianting, Yang was distressed when he saw that, in one of the *Toy Story* movies, Taiwan was referred to as a country that produced cheap second-grade goods. Li Xianting, ‘Reconstructing Local Culture’, in *Inviting the Immortals*, 1999, p.10.

⁶⁹⁹ Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

demonstrates, primordialism is a central feature of nationalism and identity formation in which history is re-written and mobilised to engender a sense of national community based on a shared history and common ancestral, ethnic and cultural ties.⁷⁰⁰ *Yun Mountain Memorandum*, which alone comprises approximately twenty-two diptyches, combines images, both real and imagined, of Taiwan prior to foreign settlement. For example, in *Yun Mountain Memorandum M9112* (1991) (fig. 4.4), the artist presents an image of an enlarged shell on the left; on the right is a landscape divided by a river; the only signs of life are the small figures, presumably aborigines, shown fishing, hunting and farming. In the foreground of this landscape a round vessel and two utensils are arranged like archaeological findings or museum objects. In another painting, entitled *Yun Mountain Memorandum M9110* (1991), a river courses through a mountainous landscape where aborigines co-exist with native animals, including bears, boars and deer which are now extinct or endangered.⁷⁰¹ On the left is another image of a shell, which is a recurring motif in this series, and is a 'memorial to aboriginal people',⁷⁰² who were driven away by the foreign colonisers from the coastal regions and flat fertile plains to the mountains. In *Lily Memorandum* these shells are juxtaposed against repeated images of Taiwan's native lily (*bai he*), which traditionally signifies purity, and was the symbol of the student political and social movements in the 1980s and 1990s. Yang describes it as a symbol of 'hope for the younger generation'.⁷⁰³

⁷⁰⁰ Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism*, Routledge, London, 1998.

⁷⁰¹ For example the Formosan Sika was considered extinct but has since been discovered; and the Formosa Serow is now endangered. Both animals are considered 'national treasures'.

⁷⁰² Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei. Yang also remarked he didn't use existing aboriginal symbols to represent the past because he didn't respect people who made money from aboriginal culture. He said he wanted to develop new symbols to represent aboriginal culture, and the seashell is one of these. Liu Pei-xiou, 'A Bright Crown', *Lion Art*, 1992, p.39 (in Chinese).

⁷⁰³ Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

The idea that the nation 'loom[s] out of an immemorial past',⁷⁰⁴ as Benedict Anderson describes it, is central to this history chapter. Although the concept of Taiwan as a nation emerged in the twentieth century, Taiwanese nationalists like Yang believed the nation was something that could be discovered, and that needed to be recovered and re-instated in order to legitimise Taiwan's sovereign status. In relation to these works Yang states, 'I want to re-awaken memories of our past. It may seem utopian and idealistic, but I think it's meaningful to the people here'.⁷⁰⁵ In his discussion of 'invented traditions' Eric Hobsbawm highlights the role of symbols and repetition as mechanisms through which an enduring sense of history, tradition and collective memory might be created.⁷⁰⁶ In addition to the brand-name 'Made in Taiwan', which is stamped onto every work, and compositional devices including the dual-frame and diptych, visual symbols and motifs including animals, shells, lilies, and archaeological remains recur in these works. Read as one sequential narrative, these two series chronicle and memorialise Taiwan's past, engendering a sense of collective memory – a sense emphasised by the word 'memorandum' appearing in the title of every work.

These works are clearly underscored by a political agenda: to verify that the aboriginals are Taiwan's first inhabitants, and to promote Taiwan's aboriginal (as distinct from its Chinese) origins and identity. This agenda was closely aligned with the DPP's ideology, which called attention to Taiwan's Austronesian roots in their efforts to demonstrate and legitimise Taiwan's distinctiveness and autonomy from China.⁷⁰⁷ This emphasis on Taiwan's aboriginal origins in Yang's work must also be understood as part of a postcolonial discourse, which revolved around the recovery of 'the land' of Taiwan and the rehabilitation of its 'native' or 'authentic' local culture (see

⁷⁰⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 1991, p.11.

⁷⁰⁵ Emma Wu, 'Anything Goes', *Free China Review*, vol.43, no.3, Taipei, March 1993, p.22.

⁷⁰⁶ Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions', in *Invention of Tradition*, 1983, pp.1-14.

⁷⁰⁷ For more information on the concept of Austronesia see Chapter One p.60, 79-80. It is relevant to note that the DPP's pro-independence ideology has not been fully embraced by Taiwan's indigenous peoples who generally view the DPP and KMT as colonisers.

Chapter One). Yang claims that Taiwan's identity and culture has been suppressed and eroded over 'three centuries of foreign invasion' contributing to the loss of a sense of 'place'.⁷⁰⁸ Pan An-yi describes this *Yun Mountain* series in relation to the processes of de-sinification and DPP's struggle for independence, which were closely aligned with Yang's political views and his 'self-proclaimed part-indigenous bloodline.'⁷⁰⁹

Central to *Made in Taiwan* is the concept of 'land', which is referred to, both literally and metaphorically, to indicate a sense of national and cultural identity and belonging. In *Yun Mountain* and *Lily Memorandum*, Yang envisions the land in Arcadian terms: as a rural but untamed paradise where aboriginal people live in harmony with the land in rustic simplicity. Here, the land is a symbol of purity, nativism, and authenticity, which is in stark contrast to Yao Jui-chung who viewed the land as a marked, stained or ruined site, and as a manifestation of the post-industrial condition (see Chapter Six). The significance of the role of 'the land' in identity formation is highlighted by scholar W.J.T. Mitchell who observes that the land/scape is not merely a representation or 'an object to be seen or a text to be read', but it is a process through which identities are invented and constructed.⁷¹⁰ Certainly, in these works the land is a means by which the artist seeks to raise identity consciousness and it is a metaphor for the Taiwan nation.

In the third section of this *Made in Taiwan* history chapter, however, the land is represented as a territorialised space, as a map and a site of conquest as the artist visually chronicles Taiwan's history of foreign exploration and colonisation. This series begins in the sixteenth century when Portuguese sailors explored Taiwan in the early 1540s, calling the island *Ilha Formosa* (lit.

⁷⁰⁸ Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁷⁰⁹ An-yi Pan (Pan An-yi), 'Contemporary Taiwanese Art', in *Contemporary Taiwanese Art*, 2004, p.93.

⁷¹⁰ W.J.T. Mitchell, 'Introduction', in *Landscape and Power*, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p.1.

'Island Beautiful'), a name that continues to be used today, particularly by pro-independence supporters seeking to emphasise Taiwan's separation from China.⁷¹¹ These paintings also visually chart the expeditions of the Spanish (1626-1642) and Dutch (1624-1662) who occupied the northern and southern parts of Taiwan respectively. Symbolically, all signs of aboriginal life and the native animals that appeared in the former section of this series have disappeared, and instead symbols of control, signified by ships, flags, monuments and maps, dominate the canvas. *Zeelandia Memorandum* (1992-1993), which is arguably the most visually compelling series in this chapter, focuses on the period of Dutch occupation, which lasted thirty-eight years, making it the longest period of foreign settlement in Taiwan (apart from the fifty years of Japanese colonisation).⁷¹²

Prior to arriving in Taiwan, the Dutch had been expelled by the Chinese from the neighbouring Pescadores islands (Penghu), which Mainland China claimed. The Chinese offered the island of Taiwan in exchange for the Pescadores, while also promising trading and commercial privileges with China. Seeking to develop its colonial and trading activities in Asia, the Dutch East-Indies Company established a base in Tayouan (now Anping) in Taiwan's south-west, near the city of present day Tainan.⁷¹³ Here, they built Fort Zeelandia⁷¹⁴ which gave this series its name and which features in at least five of Yang's paintings, including *Zeelandia Memorandum L9201* (1992) (fig. 4.5), and *Zeelandia Memorandum M9301* (1993) (fig. 4.6). In the latter image the East-Indies Company monogram, 'VOC', symbolically appears alongside a large cannon

⁷¹¹ Hsu Wen-hsiung, 'From Aboriginal Island to Chinese Frontier: The Development of Taiwan before 1683', in *China's Island Frontier: Studies in the Historical Geography of Taiwan*, University Press of Hawai'i, Honolulu, 1980, p.11.

⁷¹² This of course does not include the KMT/Mainlanders who came to Taiwan post-1945, and who some Taiwanese pro-independence advocates describe as colonisers. From the Taiwan aboriginal viewpoint they were all colonisers.

⁷¹³ Kerr, *Formosa: Licensed Revolution*, 1974, p.2; R.G Knapp (ed.), *China's Island Frontier*, 1980; Murray Rubinstein, *Taiwan: A New History*, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 2007 (1999), p.63.

⁷¹⁴ Fort Zeelandia was established by the Dutch as a military base and as an operations centre.

depicted in the foreground.⁷¹⁵ Dutch rule is generally viewed by scholars not only as a period of economic and agricultural development, but also as a period of subjugation when the Dutch endeavoured to pacify and civilize the aboriginals,⁷¹⁶ and, despite China's prohibition on migration, the Dutch authorities encouraged Chinese immigrants, many of whom came from Fujian province to work as labourers and farmers to cultivate the land of Taiwan. During this period of Dutch colonisation the population of Chinese more than doubled; and according to historical data, by 1652 Chinese immigrants in Taiwan numbered between 40,000 to 50,000.⁷¹⁷

In these works the concept of the land/nation is no longer viewed in primordial or aboriginal terms, in relation to aboriginal peoples' connections to the land, but rather it is re-envisioned as a map, as a topographical, bounded space to be explored and conquered. In four images, including *Zeelandia Memorandum L9202* (1992) and *Zeelandia Memorandum L9305* (1993), maps of Taiwan are incorporated and overlaid by images of cannons, ships, explorers and colonisers. Yang's patron, Oliver Ye (葉忠訓), collected antique maps to which Yang had access and used as visual aids in the production of these works.⁷¹⁸ The importance of maps and cartography in national identity formation is widely acknowledged; indeed, Benedict Anderson identifies maps as one of three 'institutions of power', which can generate a sense of

⁷¹⁵ VOC is an anachronism for *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* or literally 'United East Indian Company'.

⁷¹⁶ The larger population of low-land aboriginals was forced to flee to the surrounding mountain areas, and the island was opened up to agriculture. Rice and sugar were introduced which were the most profitable products on the island. John F. Copper, *Taiwan: Nation-State or Province?*, Westview Press (4th ed.), Boulder, 2003; Knapp, in *China's Island Frontier*, 1995; Kerr, *Formosa: Licensed Revolution*, 1974, p.3.

⁷¹⁷ Historians cannot determine the exact number, due to impermanent settlement of many of the Fukienese fishermen and merchants and the fact that only a percentage of the population were under Dutch control. The general consensus, however, is that when the Dutch arrived, 25,000 were living on the island which increased to 40,000-50,000 by the end of Dutch rule. See Hsu, 'From Aboriginal Island to Chinese Frontier', in *China's Island Frontier*, 1980, pp.15-17; Yu-Ming Shaw, 'Modern History of Taiwan: An Interpretative Account', in *China and the Taiwan Issue*, 1979, p.9.

⁷¹⁸ Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei; JJ Shih, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

nationhood.⁷¹⁹ Most pertinent to this discussion is Anderson's point about the circulation and 'reproducibility' of historical maps, as legacies of colonisation which have the ability to 'penetrate deep into the popular imagination'.⁷²⁰ With the rise of Taiwan nationalism and the Taiwan Studies Fever, ancient maps of Taiwan were popularly re-printed and circulated in the public domain. Anderson also discusses the concept of 'maps-as-logo' in which colonial powers traditionally coloured-in their particular territories on the map, just as Yang has done in these works using the customary yellow denoting Dutch occupation.⁷²¹

Maps are signifiers of territorialisation and, in these works, they are typically accompanied by portraits of Portuguese explorers and Spanish, Dutch and Chinese colonisers and settlers who have all been written into Taiwan's history. In one of the most striking and well-known diptyches in this series, entitled *Zeelandia Memorandum L9301* (1993) (fig. 4.7), Yang juxtaposes the portrait of a Dutch officer,⁷²² against the Ming loyalist Zheng Chenggong (鄭成功), who is popularly known in Taiwan as Koxinga. Koxinga was forced to retreat to Taiwan when the Manchus invaded China and when the resistance movement, which he led in the south, was defeated. Searching for a base from which he could consolidate his forces, avenge the Manchus, and restore the Ming Empire, Koxinga recruited an army and fleet, sailed to Taiwan where they overthrew the Dutch in 1662.⁷²³

⁷¹⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 1991, pp.163-185.

⁷²⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 1991, pp.170-178.

⁷²¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 1991, pp.174-175.

⁷²² The identity of this Dutchman is unclear. Most writers, including Yang Wen-I and Larry Lutchmansingh claim this portrait is represents the Dutch governor, and possibly Frederick Coyett (who was the last colonial governor of Zeelandia) and it certainly resembles the bust of Coyett which is displayed in present-day Tainan (formerly 'Zeelandia'). However, Pan An-yi claims it is Admiral Boltz from the East India Company. See Yang Wen-I, *Negotiating Traditions*, PhD, 2002, p.72; Luo Xiu-zhi, 'A "Kingdom of Lilies"', in *Yang Mao-lin*, 1993, n.p; Lutchmansingh, in *Yang Mao-lin: Made in Taiwan*, 1992, n.p; An-yi Pan (Pan An-yi), 'Contemporary Taiwanese Art', in *Contemporary Taiwanese Art*, 2004, p.88.

⁷²³ Koxinga's army overthrew the Dutch after a prolonged battle, lasting nine months. See Murray Rubenstein (ed.), *Taiwan: A New History*, 2007, p.13; Ralph Croizier, *Koxinga and Chinese Nationalism-History, Myth and the Hero*, East Asian Research Centre, 1977.

Koxinga occupies an important but complex and ambiguous status in Taiwan's history and national identity discourse. In official Chinese accounts, he is generally mythologised as a saviour responsible for expelling the Dutch 'red haired barbarians' and rescuing Taiwan and its people from the grip of foreign colonial rule;⁷²⁴ whereas in more recent *Taiwanese* alternative histories he is viewed as a Chinese oppressor who, much like the former KMT, viewed Taiwan as a temporary base and sought to control the local population. In this portrait of Koxinga, Yang clearly supports this latter alternative account. Pictured in full Chinese imperial regalia, Koxinga is represented as an unyielding and authoritative figure with a sinister expression as he stares out at the viewer. Most critically, he is flanked by two cannons which are strategically directed towards a map of Taiwan. In the image on the left, his counterpart, Governor Coyett, is pictured against a yellow background, surrounded by images of red battleships, Fort Zeelandia, and a portion of map, presumably of Taiwan. In this way both Coyett and Koxinga are represented *equally* as foreign colonisers seeking to gain control of Taiwan.

Yang Wen-I (羊文漪), who has analysed this particular work in detail, asserts that this image 'bears witness' to the rise of Taiwan-China separatism when 'a clear separation' or distinction was made between the histories of Taiwan and China.⁷²⁵ In the context of the development of 'history painting' in Taiwan, Yang makes an interesting distinction between these works and Wu Tien-chang's equally important *Four Eras* series (or as it is often described, the *Four Emperor* series), which she argues did not specifically focus on Taiwan but rather on 'Greater China'. Certainly, the fact that, in this image, Koxinga is situated alongside the Dutch governor, and is cast as a foreign colonialist, supports this view. JJ Shih (石瑞仁) goes further to suggest that Yang seeks to establish a 'unique' historiography that excludes China. Shih notes that

⁷²⁴ Croizier, *Koxinga and Chinese Nationalism*, 1977, p.41.

⁷²⁵ Yang Wen-I, *Negotiating Traditions*, PhD, 2002, pp.71, 80- 94.

Yang Mao-lin's creative path clearly reveals his painstaking attempts to cut through Taiwan's one-way emotional dependency on Chinese history and culture. Setting out from the historical fact of Taiwan's marginality, he seeks a unique pictorial vocabulary in order to establish a historical text and an artistic system that does not worship- and even goes so far as to eliminate - "Chinese cultural factors".⁷²⁶

Yang does not openly discuss his views on Taiwan independence, and nor would he support this claim today in regards to his work and to China where several works by Yang have been exhibited.⁷²⁷ However, based on comments made during interviews and his *Made in Taiwan* series, it is clear the artist was endeavouring to construct a new historiography, one that was unreservedly and recognisably *Taiwanese*.

In a discussion on the *Made in Taiwan* series Luo Xiu-zhi (羅秀芝) remarks that one of the impulses for creating this series was the artist's 'quest for a pure Taiwan'.⁷²⁸ This concept of purity or 'cultural authenticity' is central to postcolonial discourse, and is based on the revival of 'local' cultural values and traditions, both real and invented. The association between Yang's work and this idea of 'purity' has also been raised by other art critics.⁷²⁹ You Wei, for example, employs the analogy of an onion whose layers are peeled away by the artist seeking, unsuccessfully, to reveal Taiwan's 'pure quality'.⁷³⁰ In an interview I conducted with the artist in 2007, Yang rejected the concept of 'purity', on the grounds that it sounds 'too religious', adding that 'it's

⁷²⁶ JJ Shih, 'From Anguish to Irony: The Chinese Identity Complex in Taiwanese Art', *Art Asia Pacific*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1995, p.92.

⁷²⁷ Apart from exhibitions presented by his dealer, Tina Keng Gallery, which has a branch in Beijing, Yang's work has also been exhibited in the following group exhibitions in China: *Taipei Modern Art Exhibition* 1996, Shanghai Fine Arts Museum, 1996; *Visions of Pluralism*, National Art Gallery, Beijing, 1999; *Fiction@Love/Forever Young Land*, MOCA Shanghai, 2006; *Post Martial Law vs. Post 89*, Songzhuang Museum, Beijing, 2007; *Shanghai MoCA Envisage II - Butterfly Dream*, MOCA Shanghai (2008)

⁷²⁸ Luo Xiu-zhi, 'A "Kingdom of Lilies"', in *Yang Mao-lin*, 1993, (n.p.).

⁷²⁹ Yang Chih-fu, 'Dark Humour - Yang Mao Lin's Cultural Preface', in *Inviting the Immortals: Culture, Intercourse, Tayouan History - Yang Mao-lin*, Lin & Keng Gallery, Taipei, 1999, p.40; Chen Nai-ming, 'The New Totem Culture of Realism', in *Canonization of the Gods- The Pure Land of Maha*, Lin & Keng Gallery, Taipei, 2006, p.6.

⁷³⁰ You Wei, 'The Prankster Intellectual', in *Inviting the Immortals II-Baby You're Amazing*, Lin & Keng Gallery, Taipei, 2001, n.p.

impossible to use this term when Taiwan is multicultural'.⁷³¹ Evidently, Yang's views on this notion of 'purity' in relation to Taiwan's identity changed over time. In an interview held a decade earlier in 1997 with the Editor of *Asian Art News*, Ian Findlay-Brown, the artist emphasised the importance of defining Taiwan's 'original' or what could be described as its 'pure' or authentic culture:

Often when foreigners look at Taiwan's culture they see that its special trait is that it is a mix. They often cannot see the original. Even Taiwan people can't separate their own culture from the influences because it is such a mix.⁷³²

However, after more than two years visually investigating Taiwan's history of foreign colonisation Yang came to the realisation that Taiwan did not possess a 'pure' or 'original culture' and that it was in fact 'mixed' or multicultural.

Prior to embarking on the final chapter of his *Made in Taiwan* series, Yang announced he would no longer focus on Taiwan politics or history, which, according to Hu Yung-fen, surprised members of Taiwan's visual art community who had grown accustomed to Yang's politically-engaged work.⁷³³ Writing about his new 'Culture' series, on which Yang worked from 1995 until around 2001, Hu observes that the 'heated passion, even anger of the past has tempered [...] and now the middle-aged Yang Mao-lin is more content to reveal his human side'.⁷³⁴ Certainly, the emotive, defiant and more melancholy expressions of identity and history have been replaced by a cool and detached world view. Although Yang did not abandon his quest for identity, he no longer explored identity issues through the lens of the nation, but rather through popular culture, globalisation, and the processes of cultural transmission.

⁷³¹ Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

⁷³² Findlay-Brown, 'Grand Vision', in *Inviting the Immortal*, 1999, p.19.

⁷³³ Hu Yung-fen, 'The Reinvention of Popular Symbols as Personal Icons: Interpreting Yang Mao-lin's *Inviting the Immortals* - Culture, Intercourse, Tayouan History', in *Inviting the Immortals: Culture, Intercourse, Tayouan History - Yang Mao-lin*, Lin & Keng Gallery, Taipei, 1999, p.47.

⁷³⁴ Hu, 'The Reinvention of Popular Symbols', in *Inviting the Immortals*, 1999, p.47.

Hu describes Yang as a 'rare strategist among Taiwanese artists' and she emphasises his 'mercurial' character.⁷³⁵ As an artist, Yang has been most successful in keeping abreast of political and artistic trends and, in fact, his move away from national identity politics preceded most other artists in Taiwan. In this 'Culture' series the artist is clearly striving to appeal to a wider audience and a global art market. While not denying the influence of market forces, Yang explains that, in his view, national identity issues in art had become outmoded as Taiwan had achieved democratisation and become Taiwanised:

I'm getting older and Taiwan's been nationalised, so I've finished my job. Before martial law we weren't allowed to elect our President or governors and now we can vote. We have freedom of speech now and there are not so many restrictions. Before you had to speak out.⁷³⁶

The final 'Culture' chapter of *Made in Taiwan* marks a significant shift, both conceptually and aesthetically, in Yang's practice. In contrast to earlier works, in this series Taiwan's identity is not defined in 'pure' or essentialist terms, in opposition to the 'Other', but rather it is redefined as 'multicultural', or in Yang's words 'culturally hybrid'. In an interview I conducted with the artist, he emphasises the fact that the word 'hybrid' (雜交) in Chinese not only refers to a process of cross-fertilisation, but it also has sexual connotations relating to promiscuity. More precisely, the word conveys the historical processes of ethno-cultural interaction and assimilation that have shaped Taiwan's identity. He points out that,

From the beginning the Han invaded and only men were allowed to come [to Taiwan] so they mixed with the aboriginals, and then the Japanese and the Dutch and Spanish, and they also married with the locals – the KMT came from China – already China is a mix of different people. This is Taiwan's history.⁷³⁷

It must be noted that Yang's embrace of cultural pluralism was in accord with changing views on Taiwan's identity and with political rhetoric, promoted by

⁷³⁵ Hu, 'The Reinvention of Popular Symbols', in *Inviting the Immortals*, 1999, p.47:

⁷³⁶ Yang Mao Lin, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

⁷³⁷ Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

the DPP and KMT, on multiculturalism and the need to construct a 'new living culture' that acknowledged Taiwan's aboriginal origins, and the impact of Japanese, Western, Chinese influence. This discourse on multiculturalism was promoted by the DPP and promulgated the idea that Taiwan's 'uniqueness' was defined by its ethnic and cultural diversity, which, they believed, distinguished it from China.⁷³⁸ Reflecting on Taiwan's democratic achievements and its embrace of multiculturalism, Yang states that

Today, Taiwanese are now beginning to know themselves and understand themselves and believe in themselves. We can do anything now. But Taiwan can't reject or chose any single part of the influence – Japanese, American, Chinese. It must accept all of them for they are part of its culture...You have to get the best out of every culture and make something new.⁷³⁹

As this statement demonstrates, in this 'Culture' series the artist seeks to construct a new identity that recognises the three main 'cultural streams' (i.e. Japanese, American and Chinese), which, he believes have had a deep-rooted and enduring impact on Taiwan's identity. He borrows from a vast array of visual and textual sources, derived from Japanese and American cartoons, toys and movies, as well as Chinese traditional folk art designs, and pornographic images, which the artist claims are all part of Taiwan's local culture. He uses the expression 'cultural intercourse'⁷⁴⁰ to describe how these cultures have infiltrated or 'penetrated' Taiwan and, seeking to draw attention to this process of cross-cultural interaction, there are accompanying explicit sexual references.

Comprising two main bodies of work, including *Tayouan Memorandum* and *Inviting the Immortals I and II*, this 'Culture' chapter is vast, yet the works are remarkably similar, both conceptually and aesthetically. This discussion focuses on a small selection of representative works, and on the common themes and visual elements that unite this series. The most outstanding and

⁷³⁸ See Chapter One p.60.

⁷³⁹ Yang Mao-lin cited in Findlay-Brown, 'Grand Vision', in *Inviting the Immortals*, 1999, p.18; Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei. (Author's emphasis).

⁷⁴⁰ You Wei, 'The Prankster Intellectual', in *Yang Mao-lin: Inviting the Immortals II-Baby, You're Amazing*, Lin & Keng Gallery, Taipei, 2001, n.p.

recurring feature in these works is the dominance of American and Japanese cartoon and comic strip characters including King Kong, Batman, and Astro Boy, along with Sun Wu-kong, A-Chiang, Pokémon, and Cybertrons.⁷⁴¹ According to Yang, these characters have, over the decades, been absorbed into Taiwan's culture, reproduced into toys, graphic novels, comics, cartoons, and movies. Yang says that as a child he grew up not only with Chinese myths, but also with many Disney cartoons; and he notes that with the globalisation of contemporary culture these Disney characters, along with Japanese *anime* and *manga*, have become an integral part of Taiwan's contemporary culture.⁷⁴² In this series, these cartoon and comic characters are re-presented as 'immortal beings' endowed with superhuman abilities and, like his earlier *Behaviour and Game Playing* series, they are often depicted in armed combat, prepared to fight the evil forces on earth. They are represented as powerful and virile, accentuated by images of human genitalia, and erotic aids, which the art writer, Yang Chih-fu (楊智富) describes as the 'new objects of worship'.⁷⁴³

For example, in one of his most well-known images, entitled *Superman and Wu-kong* (1996) (fig. 4.8), two famous cartoon characters, including Superman and the Japanese character, Sun Wu-kong, the Monkey pilgrim,⁷⁴⁴ are represented on either side of the picture plane standing steadfast as if ready to go into battle.⁷⁴⁵ In the middle of these two figures is an enlarged full frontal image of a woman's genitals, shown in a birthing position, under which the words 'Made in Taiwan' are written. In the background, a large carp struggles to hurl itself out of the swirling waves and over the clouds and the dragon's gate, which traditionally connotes sexual union, as well as success and

⁷⁴¹ These robots are known as 'Autobots' in the West and are part of the Transformer series.

⁷⁴² Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

⁷⁴³ Yang, 'Dark Humour', in *Inviting the Immortals*, 1999, p.37.

⁷⁴⁴ The Monkey Pilgrim originally featured in the Chinese classic 'Journey to the West' which the Japanese comic book, Qi Long Zhu (or 'Dragon Ball Z' in the US) adopted and made famous.

⁷⁴⁵ For further information on this work see Xie Dong-shan (Hsieh Tung-shan), 'A New Historicist Approach to Yang Mao-lin's Tayouan Topography', *Tayouan Topography*, Crown Art Gallery, Taipei, 1997, p.23; Maggie Pai, Exhibition Review, *Asian Art News*, vol. 6, no 4, July/Aug. 1996, p.82; Yang, 'Dark Humour', in *Inviting the Immortals*, 1999, p.36.

promotion respectively. Although Yang does not explain the meaning of this work, the image might be interpreted as a visual allegory of the ways in which these three cultures have effectively impregnated Taiwan (signified by the woman's genitalia), becoming part of its identity.

In *Fat Prick of Steel King Kong XL9601* (1996) (fig. 4.9), a portion of a map, representing southern Taiwan is depicted with the word 'Taiouan' inscribed upon it in English. Although Yang uses a slightly different spelling, it is very similar to the word 'Tayouan' (*dayuan*大員), which refers to Taiwan, and which Yang employs in his *Tayouan Memorandum* series.⁷⁴⁶ As Yang Chih-fu points out, in Taiwanese, this word can also be interpreted as 'big penis' (signifying in this context patriarchal power and authority), and 'big money' (commercialism/consumerism).⁷⁴⁷ In this image the map is juxtaposed against a large, disembodied but erect blue penis (presumably King Kong's); and on the opposite side of this image, is a towering image of a Transformer, set against a bright yellow background, whose gun points directly at the viewer. In this work Yang's allusion to the penetration, dissemination, and propagation of foreign culture, and particularly American and Japanese cultures, in Taiwan is made explicit.

Most notably, in this 'Culture' series, American and Japanese cultural icons and symbols dominate, and 'China' appears comparatively peripheral, relegated to the background or to the borders of these images. Allusions to Chinese culture are made via symbols from Chinese traditional folk art, and particularly paper-cuttings of fish and tigers representing fertility, success, and power (e.g. *Fluorescent Formosa* 1996; *Pinocchio's Nose*, 1996; and *Ultraman and the Vibrator*, 1997). In several images in these series Yang inserts traditional Chinese proverbs, which are also popular in Taiwan, such as 'study diligently, improve day by day' (*Rockman Defends the Earth*, 1998). In *King Kong and*

⁷⁴⁶ In Chinese *dayuan* means a 'big' or 'notable' person.

⁷⁴⁷ Yang, 'Dark Humour', in *Inviting the Immortal*, 1999, p.33.

Young Beauties (1996) (fig. 4.10), the Chinese characters 戒急用忍, translated as 'Don't Rush, be Patient', are inscribed against an image of King Kong shown towering over a building upon which he has inserted a condom. This phrase was also used by Mei Dean-E in his installation *Don't Rush, be Patient* and, as stated in Chapter Three, it was a popular slogan used to emphasise the importance of economic and political restraint when dealing with China.⁷⁴⁸ However, it is unclear whether Yang's work should be read in a Taiwan-specific context or if, in fact, he is making a more general comment about politics and power. One art critic suggests it alludes to President Bill Clinton's 'inability to restrain himself' sexually as testified by the 'cigar' scandal, which broke out in the international media during this time.⁷⁴⁹ Notably, in this latter work and in his subsequent series, the stamp 'Made in Taiwan' no longer appears, which suggests that Taiwan's culture can no longer be defined in 'native' or national terms, but is effectively a product of globalisation.

By 1998 Yang had begun to experiment with digital media creating visual assemblages that combine real and virtual images drawn from popular cartoon graphics, computer games, and internet pornography.⁷⁵⁰ For example, in two works entitled *Baby You're Amazing* (2000 and 2001), which form part of his *Inviting the Immortals II* series, the artist assembles a diverse cast of characters from American and Japanese popular culture and comic strips, including Superwoman and Superman, Cybertrons and Pikachu, which are transformed into superhuman figures and endowed with physical and sexual powers. Pikachu, for example, is depicted performing sexual acts with digitally-enhanced images of naked young women who stare unselfconsciously at the viewer. In *Astro Boy's Shithole* (2001) (fig. 4.11), a close-up image of Astro Boy (signifying Japan) is about to perform oral sex on Superman (America) and, in the background, a naked woman is performing fellatio on

⁷⁴⁸ See Chapter Two p.128.

⁷⁴⁹ Yang, 'Dark Humour', in *Inviting the Immortals*, 1999, p.38

⁷⁵⁰ In 1999 Yang returned to art school to undertake a Masters degree and during this time he studied computer graphics, skills which he employs in this series.

Pikachu. Also, further away in the background, a red paper-cut tiger (signifying China and power) is shown having anal sex with a toad (Taiwan/money) (a motif that also appeared in *Florescent Formosa*, 1996).⁷⁵¹

In relation to these works and the cultural fusion of signs and symbols, Li Xianting perceptively remarks that 'one feels that Taiwan is a boat afloat in a sea of cultures, following several coastlines, but unable to find its own harbour'.⁷⁵² Certainly, any notions of cultural autonomy and 'purity' have vanished in these works that fetishise popular culture and sexuality, and seek to expose the complex power structures underlying these processes of 'cultural intercourse'. These images are bold, brash and at times offensive; however, in the context of Taiwan's identity discourse they do raise important questions relating to the powerful roles played by Japan, America, and increasingly China in the global cultural economy.

After completing this *Made in Taiwan* series around 2003, Yang turned to making bronze sculptures and two-dimensional digital prints on metal in which these same cartoon characters, in addition to fairy tale and Hollywood icons, such as Peter Pan and Marilyn Monroe, are transformed into Buddhist deities. In these works the sacred and profane merge as the artist equates the power of popular culture with religion. In two series, entitled the *Canonization of the Gods – The Pure Land of Maha* (2003-2006) and *The Three Sages in the Ocean of Misery* (2009) cartoon characters such as Astro Boy, Wu-kong, Peter Pan (figs. 4.12 & 4.13), Alice in Wonderland and Marilyn Monroe, are depicted in traditional Buddhist postures, and are elevated on a lotus-leaf throne, or riding a ferocious beast-guardian. These works engage with popular and universal themes, and are clearly designed to appeal to local and international

⁷⁵¹ The Chinese word for 'toad' is *chanchu* (蟾蜍) but is often abbreviated to *chan* (蟾) which is close to the word *qian* (錢) which means 'coin'. There is a famous Chinese fable known as 'Liu Hai playing with the Golden Toad' in which the toad has a love for gold. However, it is unclear if Yang Mao-lin was referring to this story.

⁷⁵² Li Xianting, 'Reconstructing Local Culture', in *Inviting the Immortals*, 1999, p.11.

audiences.⁷⁵³ It is beyond the scope of this chapter to include these works for analysis, but it is important to note that Yang views them as an integral part of his artistic trajectory:

In the beginning I mostly wanted to express my ideas about the impact of colonial culture versus the establishment and production of local cultures. In this series I make analogies between the imagery of foreign cultures or subcultures and the deities of folk traditions. Today I find the novelty that arises from cultural fusion, which is like genetic hybridizing, to be most vital, especially after ruminating over these ideas for the last sixteen years.⁷⁵⁴

One might conclude that Yang has come full circle. Drawing from politics, history, popular culture, and religion, Yang has investigated the concept of national identity from multiple viewpoints, only to realise that Taiwan's identity is inherently culturally pluralistic and hybrid:

The culture has in a strange way come together. But really what is being said is that if I don't want my grandfather's culture or my father's culture and if I don't want to accept contemporary culture with all its foreign and local influences then I don't have a culture or an identity – even if I accept this cultural mix I feel uneasy about the future. If Taiwan were returned to Mainland China there would be yet another political change.⁷⁵⁵

However, while the artist has re-directed his attention to broader cultural issues and to the emergence of Taiwan's 'new' cultural identity (defined as local and global), there is nevertheless a prevailing sense of anxiety and confusion regarding Taiwan's identity and future. This series raises questions including: where is Taiwan going?; what role does Taiwan play in the world?; how should it promote itself internationally? In this globalised world, who controls the production and transmission of culture? Such unanswered questions demonstrate how Taiwan's identity crisis is not merely an historical phenomenon, but an enduring aspect of contemporary society.

⁷⁵³ As evidence of their popularity, these works have featured in numerous local and international exhibitions and most notably in two collateral exhibitions held in conjunction with the 2009 and 2011 Venice Biennale. These were *Temple of Sublime Beauty* (2009) that was curated by Felix Schöeber and organised by MoCA Taipei (where the exhibition subsequently toured); and *Future Pass- From Asia to the World* (2011) that was a group exhibition co-curated by Felix Schöeber, Victoria Lu and Renzo Di Renzo.

⁷⁵⁴ Yang, 'Revisiting the Pure Land of Maha', in *Kill Alice-Final Battle*, 2011, p.69.

⁷⁵⁵ Yang Mao-lin, cited in Findlay-Brown, 'Grand Vision', in *Inviting the Immortal*, 1999, p.21.

In his series, *Made in Taiwan*, Yang Mao-lin set out on a journey, lasting more than a decade, to discover and define the essence and meaning of identity. This chapter has explored the ways he endeavoured to realise this ambition through his art, and it demonstrates the significant contribution he made to this national identity discourse. Inspired by the rise of democratisation and Taiwan consciousness, I have argued that Yang's motives for engaging in this discourse were both personal and political. Based on interviews conducted with the artist, combined with analyses of artworks produced over this decade, this research shows how Yang's views on Taiwan's identity shifted from an idealistic Taiwanese nationalist position to a more pragmatic and strategic global outlook. In this thesis I have sought to demonstrate how this shift was in accord with domestic political developments and art market forces. Yang believed Taiwan's identity and culture had successfully been 'Taiwanised' and, notwithstanding Taiwan's unresolved 'national' status *vis-à-vis* China, he eventually abandoned his quest for identity and re-directed his attention to broader cultural issues with global significance and commercial value.



Figure 4.1: *On the Spot of the Murdering Kun*, 1986, oil on canvas



Figure 4.2: *Fighting Section III*, 1987, oil on canvas (from *Behaviour and Game Playing* series)



Figure 4.3: *Slogan Section VI*, 1990, mixed media (from the *Made in Taiwan* series)



Figure 4.4: *Yun Mountain Memorandum M9112*, 1990, mixed media (from the *Made in Taiwan* series)



Figure 4.5: *Zeelandia Memorandum L9201*, 1992, oil and acrylic on canvas (from the *Made in Taiwan* series)



Figure 4.6: *Zeelandia Memorandum M9301*, 1993, oil and acrylic on canvas (from the *Made in Taiwan* series)



Figure 4.7: *Zeelandia Memorandum L9301*, 1993, oil and acrylic on canvas, (from the *Made in Taiwan* series)

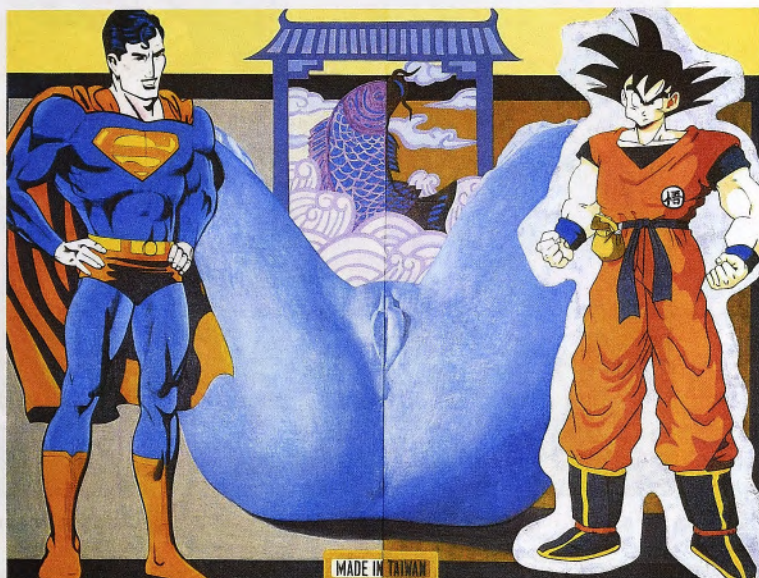


Figure 4.8: *Superman and Wu-kong*, 1996, oil and acrylic on canvas



Figure 4.9: *Fat Prick of Steel King Kong XL9601*, 1996, oil and acrylic on canvas

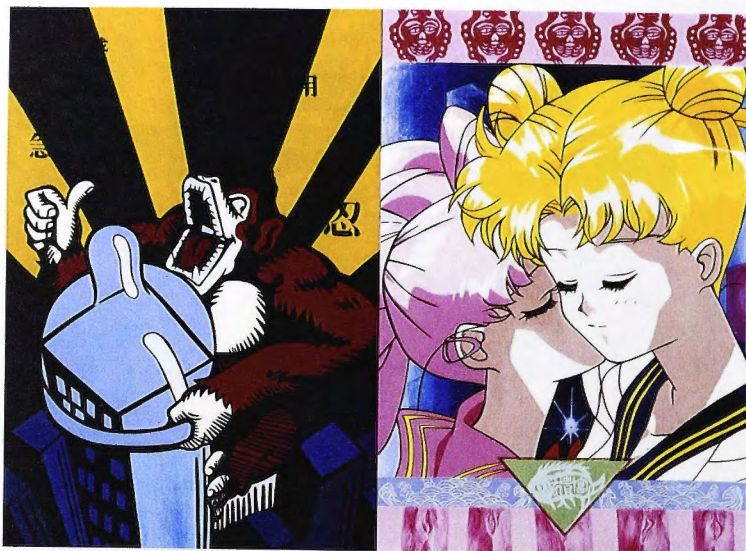


Figure 4.10: *King Kong and Young Beauties*, 1996, oil and acrylic on canvas



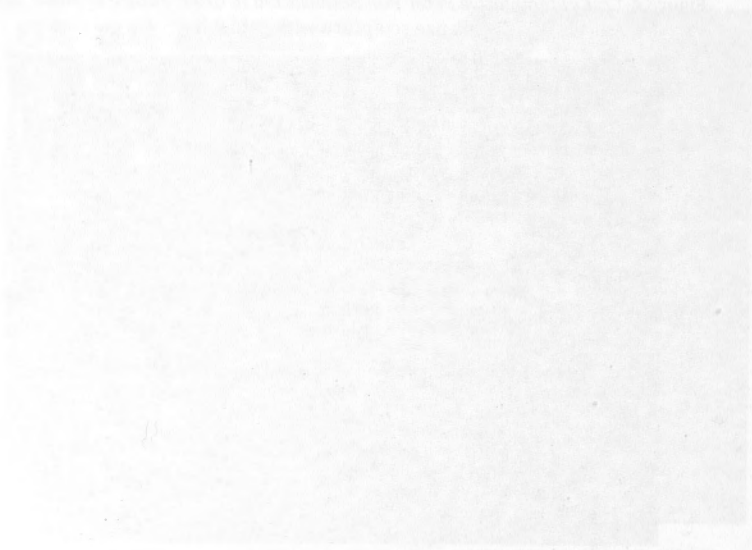
Figure 4.11: *Astro Boy's Shithole*, 2001, computer graphic on canvas



Figure 4.12: *Contemplative Peter Pan Bodhisattva in Great Future of Maha*, 2005, bronze sculpture with gold foil



Figure 4.13: *Canonization of the Gods – The Pure Land of Maha* (installation, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts)



CHAPTER FIVE

Whose Identity and Whose Nation? – WU MALI

Wu Mali (吳瑪悌) (b.1957), one of Taiwan's pioneering installation and feminist artists, is widely acclaimed internationally. Existing literature on Wu's art practice has generally focused on her later works, principally on those exhibited overseas; it does not explore the artist's involvement in Taiwan's identity discourse in-depth. It is my contention that, as an artist, writer, critic, translator, teacher, and social activist, Wu Mali played a critical role in Taiwan's identity discourse in art. This is exemplified by the significant body of work she produced during the 1990s, which critically engaged in identity politics. Wu's perspective on Taiwan's identity and her artistic approach differed markedly from that of her peers, Mei Dean-E and Yang Mao-lin (see Chapters Three and Four). Most notably, Wu examined the micro rather than the macro politics of identity, focusing on the agency of the individual and local concerns, rather than on the nation and issues regarding Taiwan's sovereignty and relationship with China. Drawing on a selection of the artist's earlier works from the late 1980s and during the 1990s, this chapter examines Wu's unique contribution to this identity discourse, and demonstrates how her works challenged artistic conventions and questioned official identity discourses.

After completing her studies in Germany, which I will shortly discuss, Wu returned to Taiwan in 1986 and became involved in the struggle for democratisation. The first section of this chapter explores how Wu's artistic focus shifted during this formative period when she responded critically to her immediate environment, and to socio-political issues relating to the re-writing of history, and the rise of feminist and environmental consciousness. This shift is exemplified in *Sophisticated Numbers* (1988) and *Love to the Highest Point* (1990), which critiqued the power of the state and its nationalist rhetoric; *Taipei Fine Arts Motel* (1996) and *Fake* (1994), which explored the relationship

between art, the museum, and society; *Epitaph* (1997), the *Formosa Club* (1998), and *Stories of Women from Hsinchuang* (1997), which highlighted the omission of women in the writing of Taiwan's history and their contribution to Taiwan's economic modernisation. Such works reflect the conceptual and aesthetic breadth of this artist's practice, and the distinctive and diverse ways Wu engaged in identity politics. This chapter critically analyses these artworks in the context of the development of Taiwan's identity discourse and Wu's contribution to it. It draws on extensive interviews I conducted with Wu over the past ten years or more, which have revealed important new insights into her views on Taiwan's identity and her role within this identity discourse.

While Wu was politically-active, unlike Yang Mao-lin, she did not promote a particular ideology nor Taiwan nationalism; in fact, as demonstrated here, she became highly critical of the essentialist and divisive nature of identity politics. As an artist Wu says she is more interested in the 'relationship between 'the "self" on a small scale and the "community" on a large scale', and although a vast number of her works created during the 1990s were politically-inspired, the artist did not engage in party-politics.⁷⁵⁶ I contend that this, along with the fact she was a Western-trained female artist working in the 'foreign' medium of installation art, distinguished and to some extent marginalised her within Taiwan's male-dominated art field and its focus on local painting.

The US-based scholar, Shih Shu-mei, describes Wu Mali's work as embodying 'vernacular cosmopolitanism', as distinct from 'metropolitan cosmopolitanism', in the sense that the former speaks from the margins rather than the centre, and is more 'adventurous and open-ended' exploring local and global concerns.⁷⁵⁷ Certainly, Wu's art moves seamlessly across, over and through geopolitical and cultural boundaries, but in Taiwan's art field it was more

⁷⁵⁶ Wu Mali, 'Artist Statement', in *Segmentation and Multiplication: Three Taiwanese Artists*, Yang Wen-I (ed.), Qiuyu Chuban, Taipei, 1997, p.42.

⁷⁵⁷ Shih Shu-mei, *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations Across the Pacific*, University of California Press, California, 2007, pp.34, 175-182.

difficult to overcome local-international dichotomies. Focusing primarily on works produced from the late 1980s until the late 1990s this chapter examines Wu Mali's role and contribution towards Taiwan's identity discourse and the ways in which she navigated this local-international divide. It also explores how, by the late 1990s, the artist abandoned her quest to resolve the 'dualism between politics and power', which she believed was the root cause of Taiwan's identity problem.⁷⁵⁸ She turned her attention to broader issues relating to the environment and began to work more closely and collaboratively with local communities, both in Taiwan and overseas. This shift towards participatory-based, socially-engaged art was, I argue, consistent with local and global artistic trends and enabled the artist to explore new pathways that transcended identity politics and the nation.

The formative years

Like artist Mei Dean-E, Wu Mali studied overseas during the early-mid 1980s. She was lured by the political and cultural freedoms afforded to most artists in the West in contrast to Taiwan where artists lived under the rule of martial law. In interviews conducted with the artist, Wu described the sense of oppression that prevailed in Taiwan when she was a student, when the government carried out a programme of 'thought control', which generated 'an atmosphere of nervousness and tension' amongst students and staff at her university.⁷⁵⁹ Notably, unlike the other three artists examined in this thesis who went to art school, Wu studied German language and literature as an undergraduate student at the Tamkang University (1975-79). She says most of her professors were politically engaged and supported the *tangwai* political opposition, which gained impetus in the late 1970s.⁷⁶⁰ However, Wu says her teachers generally would not express their political views about the KMT in public as they knew they would be questioned and possibly imprisoned. She

⁷⁵⁸ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁷⁵⁹ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008 and 1995, Taipei.

⁷⁶⁰ See Introduction p.21 and Chapter Four pp.197-198.

remarks, 'there was always a policeman inside yourself when living under martial law in Taiwan'.⁷⁶¹ Wu's experience of martial law is shared by many other artists I interviewed in Taiwan who have also described the repressive psychological effects of martial law and the prevalence of self-censorship.⁷⁶²

After graduating in 1979, Wu enrolled in the Hochschule für Angewandte Kunst (School of Applied Arts) in Vienna where she planned to study stage design, an interest she had developed as an undergraduate student.⁷⁶³ However, she ultimately abandoned this plan and instead took classes in sculpture, which she describes as another 'visual form...similar to theatre'.⁷⁶⁴ The training she received at this institute was, according to the artist, conservative and traditional, focusing on classical sculpture and aesthetics. Wu wanted to do something more 'practical...to do with daily life and with the public'.⁷⁶⁵ She transferred to the Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf (1982-1986)⁷⁶⁶ in Germany and majored in sculpture, studying under the tutelage of the renowned conceptual artist Günther Uecker and also Klaus Rinke, the latter of whom was mentored by Joseph Beuys. In relation to her move to Germany and her discovery of more experimental art forms, Wu declared, 'I finally experienced total freedom to create. However, *true* freedom was not easily achieved – even though it was "freely" given. It took me two years before I knew what I wanted.'⁷⁶⁷

⁷⁶¹ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁷⁶² The effects of martial law and the prevalence of self-censorship in the education system and in the arts were discussed by Tsong Pu, Mei Dean-E, Kuo Wei-kuo and Wu Tien-chang during interviews between these artists and this author in Taipei in 1995.

⁷⁶³ Wu in fact planned to study stage design as she originally wanted to be a producer/ theatre director. However, she had difficulties enrolling in this course and she enrolled in sculpture at the Hochschule fuer Angewandte Kunst from Oct. 1980 to Feb 1982. Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei; Wu, Email to the Author, 7 Nov. 2011.

⁷⁶⁴ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁷⁶⁵ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁷⁶⁶ Although Wu did not complete her studies in Vienna she was able to transfer to Germany and gain credit for her studies. Wu, Email to the Author, 9 Sept. 2012.

⁷⁶⁷ Fu Chia-wen Lien (Lien Fu Chia-wen), 'Mali Wu: Gnawing Texts and Reaming Words', *ArtNews*, Nov. 1995, p.227.

During this formative period in Germany, Wu developed a keen interest in philosophy and post-structuralist theory and was introduced to the works of Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes, whose theories on the 'death of the author' were the inspiration for her work *Zero Point Literature*. She also witnessed art happenings and alternative forms of performance art. Art critics and curators highlight the significant influence Joseph Beuys' ideology of artist as social agent had on the artist, and also of Dadaism, both of which were sources of inspiration for Mei Dean-E.⁷⁶⁸ While Wu acknowledges these artistic influences, she nevertheless asserts that philosophy and literature have had a greater and more enduring impact on her art practice. She states, 'my art has always been related to words,' and, certainly, language and literature have played a central role in her career as an artist, educator, writer, editor, and advisor to an arts publisher.⁷⁶⁹

Wu has written extensively about art for local art magazines and newspapers and, since the late 1970s, she has translated Western art texts into Chinese.⁷⁷⁰ Artists generally acknowledge there was a dearth of publications on Western art prior to the lifting of martial law,⁷⁷¹ and Wu Mali has been particularly outspoken about the lack of knowledge of contemporary art and criticism in Taiwan.⁷⁷² In 1994, Wu reportedly declared that it was her 'duty...to introduce

⁷⁶⁸ Victoria Lu, 'Striving for a Cultural Identity in the Maze of Power Struggles', in *Inside Out: New Chinese Art*, Joseph N. Newland (ed.), San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Asia Society and the University of California Press, Berkeley, 1998, p.170; Francoise Chatel, 'Contemporary Tendencies in Taiwan', in *ArtTaiwan*, TFAM, Taipei, 1995, p.13; Pauline Yao, 'Wu Mali', in *Spaces Within: Installations by Michael Lin and Wu Mali*, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, 2004, p.57.

⁷⁶⁹ Chen Hsiang-Chun, (Interview with Wu Mali), in *The Gravity of the Immaterial*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, Taipei, 2001, p.147. Wu Mali has also worked as Editor of the reputable Yuan-Liou publishing company in Taipei.

⁷⁷⁰ Wu translated the first two books written by artist Wassily Kandinsky that were published in Chinese in 1985. She has also translated literature on Dadaism, feminist art, object and performance art; and on Joseph Beuys. For a list of selected publications Wu translated see Yang Wen-I, *Negotiating Traditions*, PhD, 2002, p.118 (fn. 36).

⁷⁷¹ This issue was discussed by artists Yang Mao-lin, Mei Dean-E, Tsong Pu and Wu Mali during my interviews with them in 1995 in Taipei. Prior to the lifting of martial law, many artists visited the American Cultural Center to read publications on Western art.

⁷⁷² Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 1995, 2008, Taipei. Lien, 'Mali Wu', *ArtNews*, 1995, p.227.

the latest trends of the West [to readers in Taiwan] in order to close the gap between Taiwan and Western art', a gap that she estimates amounted to approximately twenty years.⁷⁷³ This comment, made during a period of heightened nationalism, is likely to have rankled with advocates of Taiwan consciousness in art, including Ni Tsai-chin (倪再沁) whose aforementioned article *Western Art Made in Taiwan* criticised artists, including Wu Mali, for being 'blinded' by the West.⁷⁷⁴ Wu defended herself against these claims, but evidence suggests the artist nonetheless felt disadvantaged as a female installation artist in Taiwan's male dominated art community, which favoured locally-trained painters. Furthermore, art critics, curators and academics, including Victoria Lu and Chen Hsiang-chun, champions of women's art in Taiwan, observe that female artists generally have not been treated seriously in Taiwan's art field.⁷⁷⁵ Having grown up at a time when Taiwan's feminist movement was still in its embryonic stage, Wu navigated an artistic domain in which women, and particularly women artists, remain a minority and subject to prevailing patriarchal attitudes in Taiwan.

While in Germany, Wu explored the material possibilities of art, and began to use newspapers or books, which she would crumble and tear to create sculptural objects, or what she describes as a 'formless language'.⁷⁷⁶ In 1985, in one of her first installations made for the academy's annual graduate exhibition in Germany, the artist laboriously cut up reams of paper to create a

⁷⁷³ Ye Sai-yun, 吳瑪俐：來自觀念藝術的啟蒙與實踐 ('Wu Mali: Enlightenment and Practice from the Conceptual Art Perspective'), 雄獅美術 (*Lion Art*), no. 282, Aug. 1994, p.38 (in Chinese).

⁷⁷⁴ See Chapter One pp. 72-73.

⁷⁷⁵ Victoria Lu, 'The Rise of Feminist Awareness and the Feminist Art Movement in Taiwan', *n.paradoxa: International Feminist Art Journal*, Katy Deepwell (ed.), no. 15 and 16, July/Sept. 2001 and July 2002, p.39. http://www.ktpress.co.uk/pdf/nparadoxaissue15and16/Victoria-Lu_36-45.pdf (accessed 12/11/2011); Chen Hsiang-Chun, 'Wu Mali: My Skin is My Home/Nation', in *Wu Mali: Treasure Island*, Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, Kaohsiung, 2002. Also see Hsieh Tung-shan, 性別與權力—藝術的女性主義與女性主義的藝術 ('Gender and Power - Feminism in Art and Feminist Art'), 現代美術 (*Modern Art*), no. 65, April 1996, pp.25-27 (in Chinese).

⁷⁷⁶ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

large, rectangular floor-based work.⁷⁷⁷ As Yang Wen-I remarks, since this time Wu Mali has been preoccupied with the 'physical and textural transformation of materials',⁷⁷⁸ and it is this transformative quality that led to her work being described by Victoria Lu as 'shamanic'.⁷⁷⁹

During a visit to Taipei in 1985,⁷⁸⁰ Wu created another installation work made of newspaper, entitled *Time and Space* (1985) that was shown at a local commercial gallery.⁷⁸¹ This installation marked an important development in the artist's career as it was not only Wu's first artwork made in Taiwan, but it was also the first that responded visually to Taiwan's immediate environment. In this 'new media sculpture',⁷⁸² as Wu describes it, the artist endeavoured to create an immersive, sensory space that would express the 'visual noise' of Taiwan's urban environment. Although the artist does not define what this visual noise is, in a review of the work, Guo Shao-zong (郭少宗) defines it in relation to 'the environmental pollution of present-day Taiwan' and to the 'explosion of the mass media'.⁷⁸³ *Time and Space* comprised hundreds of sheets of crumpled newspaper, which lined the walls, ceiling and pillars of the gallery's basement space. This enclosed space was lit from above and several neon lights were placed between the sheets of crumpled newspaper. An audio-recording of street sounds played, heightening the sense of visual noise sought by the artist.

⁷⁷⁷ The artist recalls that this work, *Untitled*, which was shown in the academy's annual graduate exhibition, was well received by her teachers and classmates in Germany. Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁷⁷⁸ Yang Wen-I, *Negotiating Traditions*, PhD, 2002, p.111.

⁷⁷⁹ Victoria Lu, in *New Art New Tribes: Taiwan Art in the Nineties*, Hanart (Taipei) Gallery, Taipei, 1993, p.12. For more information on *New Art New Tribes* see Chapter Eight pp.394-395.

⁷⁸⁰ In 1985 Wu visited Taiwan when she had finished her studies, but returned to Germany for six months and at the end of 1986 she came to live permanently in Taiwan. Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁷⁸¹ The work was first shown at the Shen-Yu Gallery (神羽畫廊) in Taipei that was run by the painter Oliver Lin.

⁷⁸² Chen Hsiang-chun, 'Wu Mali', in *The Gravity of the Immaterial*, 2001, p.147.

⁷⁸³ Guo Shao-zong, 舊報紙的精神空間：吳瑪俐的個展「空間一號」(The Spiritual Space of the Old Newspaper: Wu Mali's Solo Show Space I'), 台灣時報 (*Taiwan Times*), 8 Jan. 1986 (in Chinese).

Art historians, Hsieh Tung-shan (謝東山) and John Clark, associate the shrouded and sensory nature of this work with the feminine and physical aspects of womanhood, and Clark suggests it might be a metaphor for a woman's womb.⁷⁸⁴ However, the artist repudiates this reading stating: 'I made the audience walk into an environment that was both visually and aurally unbearable' and that this was an 'instinctive reflection of our living environment' and it responded especially to the proliferation of the mass media.⁷⁸⁵ A close analysis of this work certainly suggests the artist has purposely set out to create an enclosed, cluttered, and stifling space, made more oppressive with the sound of white noise. The Australian writer and China observer, Linda Jaivin, describes this work as 'culturally rebellious' since audiences were encouraged to trample on the newspapers, which, as Jaivin points out, were still owned by the KMT.⁷⁸⁶ Evidently, however, the work did not contravene official regulations as it was later shown at the Taiwan Province Museum of Fine Art⁷⁸⁷ in Taichung (fig. 5.1) in a group exhibition entitled *Media/ Environment/ Installation* in 1988; it was also presented in the Ushimado International Biennale in Japan.⁷⁸⁸ *Time and Space* was an important precursor to subsequent works, which also used printed paper as the primary medium, including *Gnawing Texts and Reaming Words* (1993), *The Library* (1995) and *Zero Point Literature* (1997).

⁷⁸⁴ Hsieh Tung-shan (ed.), 台灣當代藝術: 1980-2000 (*Contemporary Art in Taiwan 1980-2000*), 藝術家出版社 (Artist Publishing), Taipei, 2002, p.185 (in Chinese with English summary); John Clark, 'Touch, Texture and Concept: Three Women Artists from Taiwan', *ArtTaiwan*, Nicholas Jose and Yang Wen-I (eds.), G+B Arts International in association with the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 1995, p.85.

⁷⁸⁵ Wang Fu-dong, 看到佛就把佛殺死: 吳瑪俐 的台灣情結 ('Kill the Buddha, Once the Buddha Appears: Wu Mali's Taiwan Complex'), 雄獅美術 (*Lion Art*), no. 251, Jan. 1992, p.162 (in Chinese).

⁷⁸⁶ Linda Jaivin, 'Mali Wu: Profile Consuming Texts: The Work of Mali Wu', in *n.paradoxa: International Feminist Art Journal*, Katy Deepwell (ed.), no.5, Nov. 1997, p.55.
http://www.ktpress.co.uk/pdf/nparadoxaissue5_Mali-Wu_45-56.pdf (accessed 12/11/2011).

⁷⁸⁷ As stated in Chapter One, this museum was re-named the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (NTMFA) in 1999.

⁷⁸⁸ This work was presented in the 3rd Ushimado International Biennale in 1989. This biennale began in 1985, and is held in Okayama in Japan.

The lifting of martial law – politics and art

In 1986 when Wu Mali returned to Taiwan to live permanently, she had experienced a 'culture shock', and an overwhelming sense of excitement and anticipation that 'things were changing'.⁷⁸⁹ Opposition to the KMT's authoritarian one-party system was mounting with the rise of the *tangwai* political group and the social movement sector, which she says instilled in her 'a sense of hope'.⁷⁹⁰ For Wu, the lifting of martial law signified a symbolic break with the past. After decades of self-censorship in Taiwan, and feeling culturally displaced and politically powerless as a student living in a foreign country, upon her return Wu said she realised she could 'do something', politically and artistically, in Taiwan.⁷⁹¹ Wu's sense of artistic liberation and opportunity was shared by many other artists in Taiwan, including by Mei and Yang (as discussed in Chapters Three and Four), who witnessed the effects of the lifting of martial law and who were able to take advantage of the exhibition and commercial opportunities opening up as part of Taiwan's economic growth.

As Hsiao Chong-ray (蕭瓊瑞) demonstrates in his analysis of the lifting of martial law on art and the art market, by the end of 1988 the stock market and real estate market reached an all time high, and wealthy stock market players began to invest in art. He notes that there was a sudden increase (of nine per cent) in the number of exhibitions during the six months between the end of 1988 and the first half of 1989. However, it is important to point out that Hsiao's study was limited to exhibitions that appeared in the two art magazines, *Artist (Yishujia)* and *Lion Art (Hsiung Shih)*, and it does not take into account artists' exhibitions that were not given coverage in the period between July 1983 and June 1991.⁷⁹²

⁷⁸⁹ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁷⁹⁰ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁷⁹¹ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁷⁹² Hsiao Chong-ray, 'Changes in the Subject Matter', in *Symposium on "The Artistic Trends in the ROC"*, 1992, pp.145-185 (in Chinese with English summary).

As indicated, many intellectuals, writers and artists, and especially those who identified as Taiwanese (*benshengren*), such as Yang Mao-lin, championed the *tangwai* political opposition, which became part of the DPP; Wu also supported their democratisation campaign. It is my view, however, that Wu had a strong aversion to the parochial, prejudiced and divisive aspects of *Taiwanese* nationalism, in which one's ethnicity and political and cultural affiliations were called into question. Although Wu identifies as Taiwanese,⁷⁹³ unlike Yang Mao-lin she does not openly discuss or promote her Taiwanese family heritage, nor does she seek to advance a particular political ideology.⁷⁹⁴ When questioned about her views on Taiwan's sovereignty and identity debates in art, Wu observes that

Taiwan is an island [and]...we have always been under-represented. As you can see, whether the KMT or DPP are in power we are still manipulated by the US and China. We can say we want to be independent, but it's impossible, because those superpowers decide who we need to be. That's why we always try hard to show our identity and show we are here. Economically we do well, but internationally, we are often underestimated – *bentuhua* is about all that I think.⁷⁹⁵

Although Wu is politically-engaged, unlike the other three artists examined in this thesis, she does not seek to *represent* the nation or focus on the issues and rhetoric surrounding Taiwan's struggle for national sovereignty, which she asserts is based on a system of patriarchal politics and power. Wu declares, 'I'm not a fundamentalist', and she emphasises that while 'some people think it is important to play politics; to me it's more important to raise social awareness'.⁷⁹⁶ Soon after returning to Taiwan, Wu Mali became involved in the social movement sector. Comprising a vast number of public interest groups, this sector represented a diverse range of issues from labour equality and reform to aboriginal and women's rights and environmental pollution. Wu

⁷⁹³ Wu is sixth generation Taiwanese.

⁷⁹⁴ Wu grew up in a middle class family. Her father worked as a government official and her mother owned a bookstore. Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁷⁹⁵ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁷⁹⁶ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

Mali was particularly supportive of groups that promoted environmentalism and feminism (such as the Women's Awakening Association; and she helped establish the Taiwanese Feminist Scholars Association) – issues that have significantly influenced her art practice.⁷⁹⁷ In the years leading up to the lifting of martial law, these groups became increasingly vocal in their demands, and pressured the government for broader political participation and institutional reform.⁷⁹⁸ As Parris Chang, an academic and former DPP official, demonstrates, the rise of the social movement sector 'represented a formidable countervailing pressure against the state...and provided an important impetus for the regime to reform, liberalise and democratise', culminating in the lifting of martial law.⁷⁹⁹

Upon returning to Taiwan, Wu began to create art that responded directly to the dramatic changes taking place in society as part of the democratisation process. During interviews, the artist discussed how coming back to Taiwan marked a critical turning point in her artistic career as she began to reconsider the role and meaning of art, and its potential to raise social consciousness. She recalls that,

In Germany I knew art had a context but in school it was about form, language and it was very abstract...when I returned to Taiwan I began to think very differently...I started to ask myself what art has got to do with daily life and I wondered how I could express myself and my attitude to what was happening around me.⁸⁰⁰

This shift in thinking is visually manifest in her art. While still working in the genre of installation art, Wu clearly became less preoccupied with the

⁷⁹⁷ Wu Mali, Email to the Author, 7 Nov. 2011.

⁷⁹⁸ According to government statistics, in 1987 there were a total of 11,306 registered civic organizations on the island and approximately 2,900 protests were held between 1983 and 1988. Tien, *The Great Transition*, 1989, p.45. For more information on this social movement see this chapter by Hung-mao Tien, 'Evolution Towards Democracy', in *Taiwan Beyond the Economic Miracle*, 1992, p.12. Also, Chu Yuan-han, 'Social Protests and Political Democratization in Taiwan', in *Taiwan in the Modern World: The Other Taiwan, 1945 to the Present*. M.E. Sharpe, New York, 1994, pp. 99-113; Gold, 'Civil Society and Taiwan's Quest', in *Cultural Change in Postwar Taiwan*, 1994, pp.57-58.

⁷⁹⁹ Chang, 'The Changing Nature of Taiwan's Politics', in *Taiwan Beyond the Economic Miracle*, 1992, p.39.

⁸⁰⁰ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

formalist aspects of art she had previously explored at art school and her works became significantly more direct and politically engaged. In addition to using printed paper, she began to introduce other found materials into her work, including images gleaned from illegal video recordings of public protests in Taiwan.⁸⁰¹ The artist emphasises that, although martial law was lifted, one still had to be cautious about using such illicit material and many artists remained fearful of reprisals. She explains, 'on the one hand it was taboo, but we [artists] also knew that the world was going to change'.⁸⁰²

In 1988 the artist created her first and arguably her most explicitly political work, which responded to the Farmer's Protest held in Taipei on 20 May 1988. As one of Taiwan's first major public riots, there is a significant volume of literature written about this controversial '5/20' event, as it has since become known. Briefly, this demonstration began as a peaceful demonstration in which farmers voiced their opposition to the KMT's pro-American agricultural policies. However, it turned into a bloody riot in which several protestors were seriously injured by police, and many others were arrested. The excessive use of police force and the improper handling of the court cases sparked another series of protests.⁸⁰³

Although Wu did not participate directly in this protest, she was nevertheless involved in an exhibition commemorating the event. She created an installation work, entitled *Sophisticated Numbers* comprising video recordings along with a series of Xeroxed black and white photographs of the protest that hung on the wall forming an image of a tank. On the floor, in front of this image, Wu assembled a small mound of broken bricks and sticks which alluded

⁸⁰¹ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁸⁰² Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁸⁰³ In this Farmers Protest, approximately 4,000 people took to the streets to protest against the government's decision to allow imports of fruit and turkey from America. A riot erupted when KMT soldiers endeavoured to disperse the crowd. For further information see: Gold, 'Civil Society and Taiwan's Quest', in *Cultural Change in Postwar Taiwan*, 1994, pp.57-8; Cohen, *Taiwan at the Crossroads*, 1988, pp.72-75.

to the imprisonment of the van driver accused by the authorities of inciting the violence because he carried in his truck building debris used by protestors to hurl at police.⁸⁰⁴ The title of this work resonates with the ways political events in Taiwan's history are often recorded and remembered as numbers.⁸⁰⁵ More specifically, it alludes to the ways in which governments fabricate or manipulate facts and how these facts often are, in the artist's words, 'sealed by numbers'.⁸⁰⁶ Local newspaper reporters commented on the political dimension of the exhibition, one describing Wu Mali's work as 'an historical inquiry into the event'.⁸⁰⁷ Although this work commented on Taiwan's political situation, it could equally be viewed as a presage of the Tiananmen student protests, or 'the June 4 incident' as it is sometimes described, that took place less than a year later in Beijing.

Held at a private residence in Taipei, this exhibition was not widely publicised, but given the controversy surrounding the protests and the fact the exhibition was organised by members of the *tangwai*, it attracted a strong police presence.⁸⁰⁸ According to the artist, she was unaware the exhibition had been organised by the *tangwai* as a fund-raiser event and, seeking to distance herself from party-politics, she emphasises it was the last politically orchestrated exhibition in which she participated.⁸⁰⁹ However, the artist did contribute to further exhibitions that were underscored by a clear political

⁸⁰⁴ According to Cohen, this driver confessed to transporting rock-filled produce to the demonstration, and was sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment. See Cohen, *Taiwan at the Crossroads*, 1988, p.74. Also see Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁸⁰⁵ For example, the '2/28' incident in 1947; the 'Kaohsiung 8', relating to the trial of the eight *Formosa* defendants who were reportedly involved in the Mei Li Dao incident. Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁸⁰⁶ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁸⁰⁷ Chang Liqie, 五二〇藝術實踐，另一種抗議手法—藝術界攜手反省社會運動 ('520 Art Practice, Another Means of Protest - the Art Realm Cooperates to Reflect Social Movement'), 中時晚報 (*China Times Express*), 17 May 1989.

⁸⁰⁸ This exhibition was held in the 'Hoping Studio' in Taipei. Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei. The exhibition itself, however, did not attract a great deal of media attention. See Lee Yu-lin, 520藝術實踐 ('5-20 Art Practice'), 聯合晚報 (*United Evening News*), 21 May 1990 (in Chinese).

⁸⁰⁹ Wu says she was invited to participate in this exhibition by the painter Chen Lai-hsing whose works also featured in this exhibition. Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

agenda. Although Wu rejects the label 'political artist', I would argue that her works were certainly politically inspired during this period, and she concedes that, compared to most other artists, she is politically active.⁸¹⁰

Wu's interest in art as a vehicle for political and social activism is likely to have been encouraged by her then husband Lee Ming-sheng (李銘盛), who gained notoriety during the 1980s for his subversive artworks and performances, a number of which attracted government censorship.⁸¹¹ These included *Non-Line* (1986) that resulted in him being placed under house arrest,⁸¹² and *Lee Mingsheng=Art* (1988). In the latter work the artist carried a jar of his own faeces into the TFAM as an artistic response to the exhibition *The World of Dada* that was then showing at the museum. In his defence, Wu Mali wrote an article in the local newspaper entitled 'Without any incident how can there be Dada?' in which she explained Lee's artistic intentions in relation to subversive acts performed by the Dada movement.⁸¹³ In the early 1980s, Lee also created several public site-specific works that engaged in environmental issues, including *Mourning for Trees* (1983), which protested against the government's removal of trees as part of its urban development programme.⁸¹⁴

⁸¹⁰ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁸¹¹ Lee was the first artist from Taiwan invited to present his work at the Venice Biennale in 1993 in a performance that was an ancillary event rather than representing Taiwan. For more information on this exhibition by Lee Ming-sheng see Schöeber, in *Re-Writing Culture in Taiwan*, 2009, pp.163-166. John Clark also interviewed Lee and Wu in John Clark (ed.), *Asian Artist Interview Transcriptions*, vol. 2 (on Taiwan), School of Asian Studies, University of Sydney, 1992.

⁸¹² Lee states, 'Some people interpreted the "non" in "non-line" as "Communist Bandits" since the two expressions are homophones in Chinese' and they also considered the proposed date of the performance as a reference to the 2/28 incident in 1947. Lee Ming-sheng, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei. It is noteworthy that two years earlier, Lee Tsai-chien's abstract red steel sculpture, that was thought to represent a Communist 'Red Star', was painted over and removed from the grounds of the TFAM. See Chapter One pp.55-56.

⁸¹³ Wu also questioned why the TFAM presented Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* but did not include Piero Manzoni's 'Artist Shit'. Wu Mali, 沒有意外哪有達達? ('Without Any Incident How Can There Be Dada?'), 自由時報 (*Liberty Times*), 1 July 1988, p.11 (in Chinese).

⁸¹⁴ *Mourning for Trees* protested against the local council's decision to chop down the trees to construct a parking lot along a major road in Taipei. See Lee Ming-sheng, *My Body My Art*, Tonsun, Taipei, 1995, p.32. For more information on Lee Ming-sheng's work during this period

Lee's sense of artistic purpose and his desire to raise awareness, particularly about the environment, were also shared by Wu. As scholars demonstrate, in the wake of significant industrialisation and urbanisation, local community concerns about Taiwan's environmental pollution and degradation had intensified by the late 1980s, exemplified by a series of nation-wide environmental protests.⁸¹⁵ These were generally supported by the opposition DPP, especially when businesses associated with the KMT were targeted.⁸¹⁶ Wu was an ardent supporter of the anti-nuclear campaign in Taiwan, which gained momentum in the mid-late 1980s. As Ho Ming-sho argues, in more recent years, anti-nuclear issues have become entrenched in party-politics.⁸¹⁷ In an interview Wu emphasises that the DPP, 'which once offered hope', had done little to resolve this issue since being elected to national government. She concedes that many people in Taiwan feel frustrated by the politicisation of these issues and that Taiwan's environmental groups have necessarily become more independent.⁸¹⁸ Although Wu did not explicitly engage in environmental issues in her art until the late 1990s, she has since created several works that have explored issues relating to the ecology and climate change, including

see An-yi Pan (Pan An-yi), 'Contemporary Taiwanese Art', in *Contemporary Taiwanese Art in the Era of Contention*, 2004, pp.83-84.

⁸¹⁵ Between 1980 and 1987, there was an average of 13.75 'environmental conflicts' per year which increased to 31.33 protests per year between 1988 and 1990; and in 1991 there were 258 alone after which time there was a decline. Hsiao Hsin-huang, 'Characteristics and Change of Taiwan's Grass-roots Environmental Movement: 1980-1991', *Environmental Protection and Industrial Policy*, cited in Shui-Yan Tang (Tang Shui-yan) and Tang Ching-ping, 'Democratization and Environmental Politics in Taiwan', *Asian Survey*, issue 3, March 1997, pp.284-285. For more information on environmental issues see Jack K. Williams, 'Environmentalism in Taiwan', in *Taiwan Beyond the Economic Miracle*, 1992, pp.187-210.

⁸¹⁶ Tang and Tang, 'Democratization and Environmental Politics', *Asian Survey*, 1997, pp.281-294.

⁸¹⁷ Ming-sho Ho (Ho Ming-sho), 'The Politics of Anti-Nuclear Protest in Taiwan: A Case of Party-Dependent Movement (1980-2000)', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol.37, issue 3, July 2003, pp. 683-708. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X03003068> (accessed 15/6/2011). For further information on nuclear issues in relation to environmental concerns in Taiwan see Richard Louis Edmonds, 'Taiwan's Environment Today', in *Contemporary Taiwan, China Quarterly*, 1998, pp.208-210.

⁸¹⁸ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2009, Taipei.

Secret Garden (1999) and *Taipei Tomorrow as a Lake Again* (2008) (see Chapter Seven, fig. 7.4).⁸¹⁹

Wu Mali participated in two exhibitions presented (1990 and 1991) under the umbrella of the Taiwan Documentary Room (TDR) or, as it is also known the Taiwan Archives Workshop (*Taiwan Dang'anshi* 台灣檔案室), which the artist co-founded.⁸²⁰ The mission of the TDR was broadly to 'record and reflect what was happening in Taiwan and to provoke the public to reflect on these issues.'⁸²¹ Drawing a comparison to *Documenta* in Germany, Wu states that one of the goals of TDR was to develop an archive of Taiwan's historical, political, and cultural phenomena through the display of 'more radical art forms'.⁸²² The 1990 exhibition was curated by one of the co-founders, artist Hou Chun-ming (侯俊明), and featured works by five artists including Lee Ming-sheng and Wu Mali.⁸²³ Although Wu now downplays the political aspects of this exhibition, its title, *A Celebration of President Lee Teng-hui's Inauguration* underlines the political intent, and Yang Wen-I says it 'explicitly lampooned political authorities' and criticised the KMT's political conservatism.⁸²⁴

For this exhibition the artist created *Love to the Highest Point* (愛到最高點) (fig. 5.2), which was in essence a square cake on top of which the artist had

⁸¹⁹ For more information on *Taipei: Tomorrow as a Lake Again* see Chapter Seven, pp.362-363.

⁸²⁰ The main co-founders of this group were Wu Mali, Lien Te-cheng and Hou Chun-ming, the latter of whom had been Wu Mali's student.

⁸²¹ Gao Yi, 簪仔店裡哭喊自由「台灣檔案室」的藝術創作群 ('A Cry for Freedom at the Ganzaidian: The Artists of Taiwan Documentary Room'), *民進週刊* (*Democratic Progressive Magazine*), no. 171, 1990, pp.35-36 (in Chinese); Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁸²² Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁸²³ The artists in this exhibition included Lien Te-Cheng, Hou Chun-ming, Cheng Jen-Ren, Lee Ming-sheng and Wu Mali.

⁸²⁴ Yang Wen-I notes the exhibition comprised small mechanical animals dancing around the words 'Movement of Patriotism'; while portraits of the three leaders (Chiang Kai-shek, Chiang Ching-kuo and Lee Teng-hui) were positioned in a dark room where they might be worshipped. Yang Wen-I, *Negotiating Traditions*, PhD, 2002, p.42. This exhibition was originally to be held at the famous Wisteria Teahouse whose owner was a well known DPP supporter, but for financial reasons was later held at the Yuan Shan theatre company. Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

applied icing to resemble the blue sky and white sun of the KMT's/ Republic of China national flag. Naturally, over time, the cake disintegrates and finally collapses. Read literally, the work is a visual metaphor for the degeneration of the KMT's authoritarian government. In this context it could be compared to Yang Mao-lin's aforementioned work *On the Spot of Murdering Kun* (1986),⁸²⁵ in which Yang portrayed a foot trampling on the same KMT flag. However, rather than taking a partisan position as did Yang, Wu's work is, in fact, a broader critique of 'the dualism between power and politics',⁸²⁶ a term the artist frequently uses to explain her perceptions of the divisive and contradictory nature of party-politics, nationalism and gender politics. The artist also emphasises that this work, more than any other, exemplifies her views on nationalism.⁸²⁷ As art critic, Huang Hai-ming (黃海鳴) points out, here Wu criticises the fact people can love their country to the extent that they are unable to criticise it and will allow it to decay.⁸²⁸ In the local newspaper, a reporter similarly comments on this work stating with some irony that 'to love a forty year old rotten cake needs great courage and poor eyesight'.⁸²⁹

It is relevant to note that Wu entered *Love to the Highest Point* in the TFAM's Taipei Annual Art Prize held in the same year. However, the museum's selection jury eliminated it in the first round, claiming it was not art and that 'the cake was attracting flies'.⁸³⁰ The artist says she was aware the TFAM was conservative and that she was not in the right political party,⁸³¹ but she nevertheless hoped the work would win the prize because she believed it

⁸²⁵ See Chapter Four pp.199-200.

⁸²⁶ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁸²⁷ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author 1995, 2009, Taipei.

⁸²⁸ Huang Hai-ming, 身體/空間意象之轉變及辯證 ('The Transformation and Dialectic of Body/Space Awareness'), in 意象與美學—台灣女性藝術展 (*Mind and Spirit- Women's Art in Taiwan*), Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 1998, pp.41-45 (in Chinese).

⁸²⁹ Chen Mei-mao, 從體制的反叛到形式的反叛—導遊「第8任蔣總統就職文藝美展」(From Institutional to Formalistic Rebellion- a Guide Through the Art Exhibition in Commemoration of President Chiang in his Eighth Term), 自立早報 (*Independence Morning Post*), 4 June, 1990 (in Chinese).

⁸³⁰ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁸³¹ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei. The 'right political party' Wu refers to was the KMT who appointed the then Director of the TFAM, Huang Kuang-nan.

reflected the 'zeitgeist in Taiwan.'⁸³² In 2008, Wu Mali was invited to re-create this work for the exhibition *Post-Martial Law vs. Post-'89* curated by Hu Yung-fen, which toured to China (see Chapter Eight). Wu says she wanted to create two cakes, representing the flags of the Republic of Taiwan and the People's Republic of China but, not surprisingly, her concept was rejected by the organisers.⁸³³

In the second exhibition, entitled *An Exhibition of the Superstitious*, presented a year later by the TDR, Wu set out to respond visually to the social, political, and economic changes taking place in society.⁸³⁴ Reflecting on the meaning and significance of these two exhibitions, Wu says their importance was less for their artistic merit than for the fact that they brought together 'like-minded *avant-garde* artists' who shared a keen interest in local socio-political issues.⁸³⁵ As an artist Wu says she often felt she was speaking a different language to many of her peers who were figurative or abstract painters, and whose works, in her view, had 'zero to do with politics'.⁸³⁶

It could be argued that the TDR's objectives to reflect and respond to Taiwan's socio-political environment were closely aligned with the 101 and Taipei Art Group of which Yang Mao-lin was part.⁸³⁷ In fact, art critics and curators, Victoria Lu and Hu Yung-fen, assert that Wu Mali shared certain attributes with these artists because they were all '*avant-garde*', 'devoted themselves to criticism' and collectively expressed a 'voice of self-awareness'.⁸³⁸ While Wu

⁸³² Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁸³³ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2009, Taipei.

⁸³⁴ Literally, 'Strange Power(s) Unruly Spirit(s) Exhibition' (怪力亂神展), but for Wu it is intended to mean 'weird, monstrous, chaotic forces'. Wu, Email to the Author, 9 Sept. 2012. Lin Shu-lan, 解嚴後的省思——「台灣檔案室」邁開步伐 ('Reflections After Martial Law Ended-Taiwan Documentary Room Stepping Forward'), 中央日報 (*Central Daily News*), 10 Jan. 1991, n.p. (in Chinese).

⁸³⁵ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author 2008, Taipei.

⁸³⁶ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁸³⁷ The Taipei Art Group was discussed in Chapter Four pp.199-202.

⁸³⁸ Victoria Lu, 'The Rising New Moon: Contemporary Art in Taiwan since 1945', *Art Asia Pacific* (Taiwan Supplement), Sept. 1993, p.45; Hu, Yung-fen. 'Evolution of the Island of Tides

Mali acknowledges that Yang Mao-lin and Wu Tien-chang were amongst Taiwan's more politically 'courageous' artists at this time,⁸³⁹ she also clearly distinguishes herself from them. Wu generally viewed these figurative artists' paintings as conservative and even didactic, at least compared to the TDR's more innovative art practices.⁸⁴⁰ She resolutely rejected the 'burden' of artistic tradition and the conventions of painting, along with visual allegory and narrative. In an article she reportedly criticised an 'anti-institution' painter (whose name was withheld) stating, 'it is ridiculous to use a traditional medium [like painting] to protest against tradition'.⁸⁴¹

As discussed in Chapters One and Three, during the early-mid 1990s a clear demarcation existed amongst Taiwanese nationalists between painting and less traditional art forms, including installation and ready-made art. In part, this was reinforced by advocates of Taiwan consciousness, such as Ni Tsai-chin and Lin Hsing-yue (林惺嶽) who were both figurative painters. In his article *Western Art Made in Taiwan*, Ni Tsai-chin criticised overseas-trained artists who created installation art and placed too much emphasis on the material form, and imitated foreign artists' works (and he specifically mentions Joseph Beuys' influence).⁸⁴² According to Wu, these local-international distinctions were based on a lack of understanding of the different genres of art:

Locally trained artists during this time generally did figurative painting and those who studied abroad were more interested in aesthetics and often did abstract art or installation. Some didn't think this was art. Our languages were different.⁸⁴³

For Wu, installation art opened up a realm of new possibilities and physically involved the audience in a reciprocal relationship with the work, as they were

and Waves', in *Waves Striking: One Hundred Years of Taiwanese Arts* (千濤拍岸：台灣美術一百年圖錄), 藝術家出版社 (Artist Publishing), 2000, Taipei, pp.31-32 (in English and Chinese).

⁸³⁹ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁸⁴⁰ Yang Wen-I, *Negotiating Traditions*, PhD, 2002, p.89.

⁸⁴¹ Gao Yi, 'A Cry for Freedom', 1990, p.37 (in Chinese).

⁸⁴² Ni, 'Western Art Made in Taiwan', in *Taiwan Consciousness*, 1994, pp.66-68 (on installation art) and pp.63, 68 (on Beuys) (in Chinese).

⁸⁴³ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

challenged to interact with it. Audience participation thus was increasingly important for Wu, whose practice became socially-engaged. Wu claims that when she returned to Taiwan the term 'installation art' did not exist,⁸⁴⁴ noting that museums and galleries, which customarily displayed painting, did not know how to deal with this genre.⁸⁴⁵ In relation to her experience in Germany where she began experimenting with installation art, Wu says:

[In the West] art is very free, and you can choose whatever you want as media. That's what I like about Western art...galleries in Taiwan are not interested in my installation works. In fact their viewpoint of art is very narrow.⁸⁴⁶

Although Wu does not specifically mention any particular art gallery or museum, her comment may have been directed at the former TFAM Director, Chang Chen-yu (張振宇) (1995-96), who was also a practitioner and a strong advocate of painting.⁸⁴⁷ As mentioned in Chapter One, Chang wrote an article that was published in the TFAM's journal in which he criticised conceptual artists who 'create art for themselves' and care only about form and style, and do not interact with the 'real land' (現實土壤) of Taiwan.⁸⁴⁸ Although he does not name the artists he criticises, Chang's opinion of some of Wu Mali's more conceptually-oriented international work is widely known. He had publicly criticised the jury's selection of works in the 1995 Venice Biennale, claiming they did not 'represent' Taiwan and Wu Mali's *The Library* (1995) was amongst these works.⁸⁴⁹ Wu Mali's view of Chang was mutual, and it was confirmed when she joined a small group of similarly disenfranchised artists

⁸⁴⁴ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁸⁴⁵ Wu Mali cited in Katy Deepwell, 'Mali Wu: A Profile', *n.paradoxa*, no. 5, 1997, p.46 http://www.ktpress.co.uk/pdf/nparadoxaissue15and16_Victoria-Lu_36-45.pdf (accessed 12/11/2011); Lien, 'Mali Wu', *ArtNews*, 1995, p.227. On the development of installation art in a museum context see Lien Te-Cheng, 'The Interaction Between Art Museums and Contemporary Art in Taiwan', in *Symposium on "The Artistic Trends in the ROC"*, 1992, p.242 (in Chinese with an English summary).

⁸⁴⁶ Karen Richardson, 'Features', *China News*, Jan. 5, 1997, p.11.

⁸⁴⁷ As an indication of Chang's strong preference for painting, Wu says she heard he wanted to change the TFAM's Biennial competition to an International Painters competition see Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁸⁴⁸ Chang Chen-yu, 'To Break the Spell', *Modern Art*, 1996, pp.43-51 (in Chinese).

⁸⁴⁹ See Chapter One p.77.

who successfully lobbied the government for his dismissal.⁸⁵⁰ As I will discuss next, Wu also turned down the invitation to participate in the TFAM's exhibition, *Quest for Identity*, which Chang initiated. During an interview in 1995, at the height of this debate, the artist observed that

The trouble with Taiwan is you need a lot of energy to protect yourself....you can't argue with them...[these people] are products of the political situation....identity is a fashion....it's easier to accuse than to try to understand what is art.⁸⁵¹

A question of art and the politics of the museum

Seeking to move beyond these nationalist native/foreign binaries, Wu focused her attention on the meaning and role of art, which she explored in a museological context and in relation to gender issues. *Taipei Fine Arts Motel* (1996) (figs. 5.3 & 5.4) was Wu's first interventionist work created outside the confines of the museum, and it responded to the TFAM's 1996 biennial *Quest for Identity*. As noted, Wu Mali was one of 130 local artists invited to participate in this exhibition, but she declined on the basis that she did not want her work to be displayed under the sub-theme 'Sexuality and Power'. Curated by Hsieh Tung-shan (謝東山), this section explored identity politics in the context of the relationship between body and gender. Although Chen Ming-hui (陳明惠) praises the exhibition as the first that called public attention to women's art,⁸⁵² Chen Hsiang-chun is more critical, commenting that the display was 'full of sexualised and demonised female bodies', which, she argues, reflected an 'outlook that centred on narrow male heterosexuality'.⁸⁵³ Certainly, the exhibition included several sexually explicit works depicting male and female genitalia, themes which Victoria Lu observes became

⁸⁵⁰ In an interview Wu Mali described Chang Chen-yu thus: 'He did things in a rude way – if you're not a well trained politician you don't know how to play the power. He had to quit.' Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei. For more on Chang Chen-yu see Chapter One.

⁸⁵¹ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁸⁵² Chen Ming-hui, 'Contemporary Taiwanese Women's Arts: Curating a Movement Into Art', *IIAS Newsletter*, no. 40, Spring, 2006, p.18. http://www.iias.nl/nl/40/IIAS_NL40_18.pdf (accessed 29/8/2010). Chen wrote a PhD thesis on the museological display of women's art in Taiwan, entitled *Visualising Culture and Gender: Postcolonial Feminist Analyses of Women's Exhibitions in Taiwan, 1996-2003*, Loughborough University, Leicestershire, 2008.

⁸⁵³ Chen, 'Wu Mali: My Skin', in *Wu Mali: Treasure Island*, 2002, p.2.

increasingly 'chic' in Taiwan in the 1990s.⁸⁵⁴ After attempting, unsuccessfully, to persuade the curatorial committee to present her work under one of the other five sub-themes, Wu withdrew from the exhibition. She wrote an article published in one of Taiwan's leading newspapers, *China Times* (中國時報), in which she criticised the representation of women's art in this exhibition. She declared that the 1996 Biennial 'reflected that sexual discrimination is everywhere' and that it is 'a lesson to female artists in Taiwan' that they 'must remain vigilant' or the 'vicious cycle will continue'.⁸⁵⁵

Taipei Fine Arts Motel explores the role of the museum, which Wu compared to a service provider, in this case to a motel, or more precisely a love hotel/motel. In Taiwan, a love hotel customarily offers short-stay accommodation for couples or lovers seeking privacy. During the 1950s, when American soldiers were stationed on the island, they operated as brothels, and have become an important part of Taiwan's sex industry. The *Taipei Fine Arts Motel* essentially comprises a small card, similar to a business card, upon which was written:

NT \$20 per visit

Exclusive celebrity club on Chung-Shan N. Rd.

Good choice for fun seekers.

Taipei Fine Arts Motel

Revamped and reopen/million dollar interior deco/

Innovative games & outstanding performance

100% satisfaction guaranteed/ Call hotline (02) 5957 656

Special offer: from July 13 to October 13, 1996

As part of the site-specific nature of this work, Wu distributed this business card in the areas closest to the museum where many of Taipei's love

⁸⁵⁴ Lu, 'The Rise of Feminist Awareness', *n.paradoxa*, July/Sept 2001 and July 2002, p.41.

⁸⁵⁵ She also notes that eighty per cent of the TFAM staff are women and questions why the curators of the biennale are all men. Wu Mali, 1996台北雙年展-幕後沒有女人味 ('The 1996 Taipei Biennial - Behind the Scenes There Is No Feminine Presence'), 中國時報 (*China Times*), Aug. 24, 1996 (in Chinese).

hotels/motels are located.⁸⁵⁶ Wu Mali says a number of curious 'fun-seekers' who were inspired by the special offer on the card phoned the hotline number and to their surprise they realised this number was, in fact, the TFAM's main operator's number. According to the artist the operator received numerous calls.⁸⁵⁷ Viewed in a broader art context, this work can be interpreted as a form of public and dialogical art, engaging on a grass-roots level with the community and raising social consciousness. This work could be compared on an artistic level to Afro-American artist, Adrian Piper's, *Calling Card* (1986-1990) series. Wu rarely discusses her artistic influences beyond art school and has not referred to Piper's series (to my knowledge); nevertheless there is a close resemblance to Piper's series, which also appropriates and manipulates the business-card genre to raise public consciousness (albeit about race and gender rather than the museum) and relies on audience participation.

Seeking to explain the rationale for this work, Wu wrote an article entitled 'Soliciting Customers for the Art Museum' (為美術館拉客) that was published in the local Chinese-language newspaper, *Liberty Times* (自由時報, *Ziyou Shibao*). In this she somewhat tendentially explains that, like a motel, the TFAM also strives to attract visitors and she hoped this work would help the museum increase its audience numbers, which had apparently been dwindling. Wu claims her goal was to 'call for the public to embrace the art museum' but, according to another report, Wu's action provoked the audience to consider the purpose of art museum, which was in fact her primary intention.⁸⁵⁸

A year prior to making this work, Wu produced *Fake (The Empty Ruse)* (1994) (fig. 5.5). This was shown at the TFAM and also explicitly questioned the

⁸⁵⁶ Wu focused her distribution on Nanjing East Road (南京東路) and Jilin Road (吉林路). See Lee Wei-ching, 休息只要二十元? 吳瑪琍佔領美術館 ('Relaxation For Only \$NT20? Wu Mali Occupies the Museum'), 中國時報 (*China Times*), July 15, 1996 (in Chinese).

⁸⁵⁷ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁸⁵⁸ Wu Mali, 為美術館拉客 ('Soliciting Customers for the Art Museum') 自由時報 (*Liberty Times*), 20 July, 1996 (in Chinese); Lee Wei-ching, 'Relaxation For Only \$NT20?', *China Times* 1996 (in Chinese).

function and agency of the museum. In this work the artist simply presented an empty space that was cleared of artworks but remained spot-lit.⁸⁵⁹ On the front wall, which the visitor had to pass before entering this vacant room, the following words were written (in Chinese and English):

FAKE
I am the FAKE author
You are the FAKE audience
Let's stroll through the FAKE museum

On the reverse side of this wall another longer passage of text was written in Chinese. This passage was a quote from an ancient Chinese classical text on the *Thirty-Six Stratagems*, and included 'The Stratagem of an Empty City' (*Kong cheng ji*). This stratagem is a tale based on a classic military manoeuvre, which is similar to the well-known story of the Trojan Horse.⁸⁶⁰ Essentially, Wu set out to deceive the audience, making them believe there were artworks displayed inside the room when, in fact, there was nothing. The art critic, Huang Hai-ming (黃海鳴) (who was appointed Director of the TFAM in 2012) was invited by the artist to give a guided tour of this virtual exhibition at the opening, a role which he willingly performed dressed as a female guide. Wu says her intention in making the work was to question and challenge the audience as well as to consider the meaning of art and the political and social function of museum as a site for representation.

These works call attention to the 'legitimising power' of the public art museum, which in a Western context could be likened, as Carol Duncan

⁸⁵⁹ The artist points out that this exhibition space is located on the basement floor, away from the main exhibition spaces. It was reserved for local artists' application-based exhibitions at the TFAM. Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2009, Taipei. This point was also made by Tsong Pu who presented an exhibition in this space in 2010 that was poignantly entitled *Art from the Underground* (*Dixia yishu* 地下藝術) (see Chapter Seven p.368).

⁸⁶⁰ As one of the *Thirty-Six Stratagems* 'The Stratagem of an Empty City' was written in the third century AD, and was based on a story about enemy forces which were lured into the city, believing it was empty and were ambushed. The story was incorporated into 'The Annals of the Three Kingdoms' (Sanguo Yanyi). Yang Wen-I, *Negotiating Traditions*, PhD, 2002, p.122.

suggests, to temples or churches.⁸⁶¹ As an artist whose overarching mission was to explore the dualism between politics and power, it is clear that Wu was endeavouring in these works to deconstruct and undermine the institutional agency of the museum as a 'political and ideological apparatus', and as a site for representation.⁸⁶² Both these works could be viewed as part of a broader artistic discourse to which renowned international artists (including Hans Haacke, Louise Lawler, Daniel Buren and Andrea Fraser) have contributed in their museum interventions. Like these artists, Wu is interested in the interpretative and display strategies, or the 'representational practices' as Stephen Greenblatt describes them, employed by museums to communicate to an audience.⁸⁶³ However, these works not only target the art museum, but also critically reflect upon the state of the art system more generally in Taiwan. In an interview with a foreign journalist published in the local English-language newspaper, *China News*, in 1997 Wu states:

The art scene and art patronage in Europe and Taiwan are not really the same at any level. Art here [in Taiwan] is not necessarily made by the artist and there's no qualified system of art critics, good galleries or a good market here – and you need these things to reach a higher level as an artist. In Taiwan galleries usually just choose to feature artists who are already famous.⁸⁶⁴

While Wu bemoaned the lack of infrastructural and financial support for more experimental art forms in Taiwan,⁸⁶⁵ her work nonetheless was selected for several local and international exhibitions during the 1990s. It was represented in most major exhibitions of contemporary Taiwan art organised by the TFAM including *Taiwan Art 1945-1993* (1993), the 1998 Taipei Biennial *Site of Desire*, and *Mind and Spirit – Women's Art in Taiwan* (1998). As mentioned, *The Library* (1995) featured in the 1995 Venice Biennale; and two years later another work by Wu, entitled, *Zero Point Literature* (1997) was

⁸⁶¹ Duncan, 'Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship', in *Exhibiting Cultures*, 1991, pp.88-103.

⁸⁶² Preziosi, 'Collecting/ Museums', in *Critical Terms for Art History*, 1996, pp. 281-291.

⁸⁶³ Stephen Greenblatt, 'Resonance and Wonder', in *Exhibiting Cultures*, 1991, pp.42-57.

⁸⁶⁴ Richardson, 'Features', *China News*, 1997, n.p.

⁸⁶⁵ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2009, Taipei. She also discusses the difficulties of getting financial support in Taiwan for her work, and of the lack of critical engagement in the arts in Taiwan in Lien, 'Mali Wu', *ArtNews*, 1995, p.227.

presented in an ancillary exhibition of Taiwan art that was held in conjunction with the Venice Biennale.⁸⁶⁶ In addition, Wu's work featured in several other major international exhibitions, including *Art Taiwan* (1995), *Inside Out-New Chinese Art* (1998), and the *Asia-Pacific Triennial* (1999); during this period she also received several awards and overseas artist residencies.⁸⁶⁷

The Library (fig. 5.6) is arguably Wu Mali's most internationally recognised work and it has attracted a relatively large body of literature.⁸⁶⁸ Although this installation did not engage directly with identity issues, and was created primarily for the consumption of international audiences, it nonetheless deserves mention as it was a landmark work in her career, both in terms of her art practice and profile in the local and international art community.⁸⁶⁹ Briefly, this installation comprises a series of 'books' made from clear Perspex boxes, each of which contains reams of finely shredded printed paper. These are not just any printed material, but they are the remains of some of the world's classic books, including *The Bible*, *Das Kapital*, *Three Principles of the People*, Buddhist sutras, along with other well-known Chinese and Western political, religious and cultural texts.⁸⁷⁰ About this work the artist says,

These influential books carry a certain historical value. But [...] they may not fulfil the demands of today's context or may have been refuted by today's

⁸⁶⁶ *Zero Point Literature* was displayed in the exhibition *Segmentation and Multiplication*, curated by Yang Wen-I, and it also included artists Tsong Pu and Fang Marvin Minto. For more information on Wu's work and on the exhibition see Yang Wen-I (ed.), *Segmentation and Multiplication*, 1997.

⁸⁶⁷ These include the Fulbright Fellowship (1994), the Fellowship of Lee Chung-sheng Foundation of San Francisco (1997), the Artist-in-Residence Programme at the Mattress Factory in Pittsburgh (1999); and the Fellowship of Künstlerhauser Worpswedes in Germany (2002).

⁸⁶⁸ For further information on *The Library* see Yang Wen-I, *Negotiating Traditions*, PhD, 2002, pp.107-110, 116-119; Yang Wen-I (ed.), *Segmentation and Multiplication*, 1997; Essays by Yang Wen-I and Françoise Chatel in *ArtTaiwan*, 1995; Deborah Hart, 'Mali Wu', in *Beyond the Future-Third AsiaPacific Triennial*, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 1999, p.150; Deepwell (ed.), 'Mali Wu: A Profile', *n.paradoxa*, 1997, pp.45, 51-52 (online); Shih, *Visuality and Identity*, 2007, pp.180-181.

⁸⁶⁹ The artist says that after showing this work in Venice, she received numerous invitations to participate in exhibitions overseas. Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁸⁷⁰ The books in *The Library* were classified into six groups: The World of Art; Encyclopaedia; Chinese Classics; Science and Civilization in China; Nobel Prize in Literature; Godfather ('books on or by great men'). Deepwell, 'Mali Wu', *n.paradoxa*, 1997, p.52 (online).

learning. Thus, the act of shredding them [...] destroys the original written structure and hence is akin to re-writing. Once shredded, the beautiful patterns and structures formed of the fragments become works of art in their own right and take on eternal value. This work represents my personal reflection and contemplation of human civilization as a whole.⁸⁷¹

The Library developed from the aforementioned *Time and Space* (1987), and *Gnawing Texts and Reaming Words* (1993) that has been exhibited several years earlier in Taiwan. In the latter installation the artist shredded two of Taiwan's most well-known political treatises, including Sun Yat-sen's *Three Principles of the People* and Taiwan's *National Law*. These shredded books were similarly encased in clear Perspex boxes, the size of books, and displayed neatly on shelves affixed to the walls. When asked about the local audiences' reaction to this particular work, Wu remarks that people were indeed shocked that Taiwan's iconic texts had been destroyed,⁸⁷² and it is likely that, had it been shown only a decade earlier, the artist would at least have been reprimanded if not imprisoned for this subversive act. In my view, this work dissects and re-interprets history and language, not as narrative, but as political signifier and aesthetic object. It explicitly explores the dualism between politics and power, which the artist has often discussed in interviews; and, according to Wu, it mirrors what she describes as the 'destructive mentality' that prevailed in Taiwan during this period when nationalist fervour permeated politics and society.⁸⁷³ Although Wu did not elaborate or specify in this interview what this 'destructive mentality' was or how it manifested itself, it is likely she was referring to the de-sinification movement, led by the DPP, to re-write Taiwan's history and erase names and other references to China. Although Wu did not support Taiwan's reunification with China, she also did not approve of the ways Taiwanese nationalists were using Taiwan's identity and history as a political football. As Pan An-yi (潘安儀) remarks, and as Yao Jui-chung demonstrates in his work (see Chapter Six),

⁸⁷¹ Wu Mali, 'Artist's Statement', in *ArtTaiwan*, 1995, p.79.

⁸⁷² Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2009, Taipei.

⁸⁷³ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2009, Taipei.

politicians frequently used and manipulated national identity issues to cause dissension amongst groups and to gain political influence and power.⁸⁷⁴

Re-examining history from a female viewpoint

As demonstrated in previous chapters, during early-mid 1990s, Taiwan's history was a popular subject of intellectual and cultural inquiry, and Wu was one of many artists who turned her attention to the re-writing of Taiwan's past. Unlike artists including Mei, Yang and Yao who explored Taiwan's history through the lens of the nation, Wu Mali focused on the individual stories, and particularly women's stories, formerly overlooked in the re-writing of Taiwan's history. As Anthony D. Smith points out, the role and contribution of women is frequently ignored or passed over in histories and theories of nation-building, which, he emphasises, privilege the (male) nationalist struggle over and above other gender and class-related struggles.⁸⁷⁵ In a Taiwan context, Chen Chao-ju (陳昭如) analyses, from an historical viewpoint, the legal dimensions of national membership, which, she argues, is based on a patrilineal system, which serves to subordinate women.⁸⁷⁶ Focusing on the omission of women in Taiwan's history, Wu set out to investigate how histories are written, becoming part of a grand historical narrative; she also examines concepts of authorship and agency in terms of questioning *whose* history is being written.

This is exemplified in *Epitaph* (1997) (fig. 5.7), an audio-visual installation, which the artist created for the TFAM's exhibition *Sadness/Transformed – 2/28*

⁸⁷⁴ An-yi Pan (Pan An-yi), 'Contemporary Taiwanese Art', in *Contemporary Taiwanese Art*, 2004, p.89

⁸⁷⁵ Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, 1998, pp.205-210.

⁸⁷⁶ Chao-ju Chen, 'Gendered Borders: The Historical Formation of Women's Nationality under Law in Taiwan', *positions* (special issue on the 'Cultural State of Contemporary Taiwan'), vol. 17, issue 2, Duke University Press, 2009, pp. 289-314. DOI: 10.1215/10679847-2009-001 (accessed 4/6/2012). Chen examines how a woman's nationality has been defined by her marital status (especially during the period of Japanese colonisation) and she investigates how, with the rise of the social movement sector, legal reforms have been introduced which have given women greater equality and entitlement to national membership.

Commemorative Exhibition held in 1997. This exhibition marked the fiftieth anniversary of the 2/28 incident and was the second of a series of annual exhibitions at the TFAM that set out to commemorate and promote to audiences the 'educational and historical significance' of this event.⁸⁷⁷ In this exhibition contemporary artists were invited for the first time to respond visually to this incident, which, for Wu, offered fertile ground to examine the role of women whose stories have been ignored, forgotten or untold in the re-writing of histories about this event. Chen Hsiang-chun, whose doctoral thesis focused on visual representations of the 2/28 incident, remarks that in historical narratives on this incident 'Taiwanese male victims have been rehabilitated as heroes [and] martyrs...Women, however, still remain invisible'.⁸⁷⁸ *Epitaph* offers a counterpoint to these patriarchal narratives on nationhood, or 'His/tory' as Wu defines it. At the entrance of the small room where this work was displayed the following words are written: 'His/story has been revised – the rioter may become the hero. How about her story?'

Drawing from an archive of oral histories about women's experiences of the 2/28 incident,⁸⁷⁹ Wu creates an audio-visual installation, in which the women's words are recorded and inscribed within the semi-enclosed walls of the exhibition space. Each of these stories begins with the word 'She': for example, 'She washes the dead body with tears' and 'She cries her life away' and the fear, trauma, and loneliness experienced by these women is underscored in the text. Metaphorically speaking, *Epitaph* is a memorial to the women who lived through or suffered the effects of this event. In his

⁸⁷⁷ This series of 2/28 exhibitions was an initiative of the former DPP Taipei Mayor Chen Shui-bian. See Chapter One p.83.

⁸⁷⁸ Chen Hsiang-chun, 'Reading Taiwan and the Issue of Difference in a Global/Local Frame: Epitaph by Wu Mali in *Sadness/Transformed - 2/28 Commemorative Exhibition in Taiwan in 1997*', (conference paper), 2nd Conference of the European Association of Taiwan Studies, 2005, p.2. Also see Chen Hsiang-chun, *Beyond Commemoration: The 2-28 Incident, the Aesthetics of Trauma and Sexual Difference*, PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2005.

⁸⁷⁹ These were excerpts from Juan Meishu's book *Sound of Weeping in a Dim Corner* – in which the author interviewed families of the 2/28 victims. Chen, 'Reading Taiwan and the Issue of Difference', in *Sadness/Transformed*, 2005, p.13

discussion on nationalism, Benedict Anderson explores the ways death is memorialised, and the role of epitaphs in the formation of imagined communities has relevance to this particular work.⁸⁸⁰ However, importantly, Wu does not explicitly promote nationalism, nor does she endorse the nationalist identity narratives written about this event. In my view, in this work she is not only critiquing, but also endeavouring to undermine them. Wu's political critique effectively dismantles Taiwan's historical canon, which she believes privileges the male. Huang Hai-ming insightfully remarks, '[Wu Mali] reminds us that men have their history, but women's history is not written yet'.⁸⁸¹

Furthermore, unlike artists including Yang Mao-lin, whose work also featured in this series of 2/28 exhibitions, Wu does not seek to convey visually the brutality and bloodshed associated with this event. While *Epitaph* subtly alludes to the source of conflict, it encourages viewers to develop their own personal relationship with the unidentified victims by listening to and contemplating their stories. On the central wall, the artist projects an audio-visual image of the sea. While reading and listening to excerpts from these women's stories, viewers can also hear the subtle and repetitive sounds of the sea pounding against the rocks. As Shih Shu-mei observes, the forceful and persistent sound of the waves helps to wash away the pain of the women's suffering, and, in my experience of the work, it heightens the meditative and profoundly moving nature of this work.⁸⁸²

Thus, by the mid-late 1990s Wu Mali had begun to focus greater attention on gender issues, which she explored through the prism of politics and power. Wu states, 'most male artists were interested in politics and were not interested in these gender issues – but this is part of our daily life – if we are talking about

⁸⁸⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 1991, pp. 9-10, 187-206.

⁸⁸¹ Huang Hai-ming, 'The Transformation and Dialectic', in *Mind and Spirit*, 1998, p.43 (in Chinese).

⁸⁸² Shih, *Visuality and Identity*, 2007, p.176.

power, well this is another side of it.⁸⁸³ After returning to Taiwan, Wu became involved in the feminist movement led by the Women's Awakening Association (re-named the Awakening Foundation) that was formally established in 1982 of which Wu was a member.⁸⁸⁴ This association, whose mission is to 'raise female consciousness, encourage self-development and voice feminist opinions', was presided over by the DPP's former Vice-President, Annette Lu (呂秀蓮) and, with the rise of democratisation, became increasingly vocal in its promotion of women's rights.⁸⁸⁵ Wu also helped initiate the Taiwanese Feminist Scholars Association (TFSA), founded in 1993, which was a support network and advocacy group established to integrate feminist concerns with scholarly and political interests by promoting feminist consciousness in universities.⁸⁸⁶

According to Victoria Lu (陸蓉之), feminist awareness was discernible in Taiwan's art field in the early 1990s, which, she emphasises, was comparatively later than in politics and literature. Lu curated one of the first exhibitions of women's contemporary art in Taiwan (in association with the Women's Awakening Foundation) in 1990,⁸⁸⁷ and she has written extensively

⁸⁸³ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁸⁸⁴ The Awakening Foundation was one of the most active feminist groups since the 1980s. This group started as a magazine established to raise public awareness about women's issues and promote women's rights. For more information on this group see Ku Yenlin, 'Selling a Feminist Agenda on a Conservative Market: The Awakening Experience in Taiwan', *Radically Speaking: Feminism Reclaimed*, Diane Bell and Renate Klein (eds.), Spinifex Press, Melbourne, 1996, pp. 423–428; and the Awakening Foundation site <http://www.taiwanwomencenter.org.tw/ct.asp?xItem=98045&ctNode=280&mp=2> (accessed 30/6/2012).

⁸⁸⁵ For more information on the rise of the women's movement in Taiwan see Sung Mei-hwa, 'Feminist Consciousness in the Contemporary Fiction of Taiwan', in *Cultural Change in Postwar Taiwan*, 1994, pp. 275–295; Laura Li, 'Women's Rights', *Sinorama*, Phil Newell (trans.), Aug. 1995, pp. 45–57; Jenny Hu, 'Sexual Liberation Comes to Taiwan', *Sinorama*, vol. 20, no. 6, June 1995, pp. 85–93.

⁸⁸⁶ For more information on the TFSA see: <http://www.feminist.sinica.edu.tw/newpage/english1.htm> and http://www.feminist.sinica.edu.tw/index_new.htm# (accessed 7/11/2011).

⁸⁸⁷ This exhibition was called *Women and Art* and was held at the Esite Gallery in Taipei. In conjunction with this exhibition a public forum, initiated by Wu and other participating artists was held which explored feminist issues in art, and Lu says it marked the first time these

on women's art in Taiwan. Lu explains that, with the exception of artists like Wu Mali, most female artists in Taiwan have been unwilling to embrace the feminist label as they were concerned they would be excluded or discriminated against by the art community and art market, which Lu says privileges men.⁸⁸⁸ She remarks that this 'framework of sexual discrimination and patriarchy' still prevails in Taiwan as women continue to 'face difficulties breaking into the Taiwan art market'.⁸⁸⁹ Based on my observations, women artists in Taiwan certainly faced significant family, economic, and social challenges if they wished to enter into and compete for attention in the local art field, which was very much male-dominated during the 1990s.

The challenges faced by women artists in Taiwan has been remarked upon by several curators, critics, and writers who have highlighted the limited opportunities for women artists generally in Taiwan, and these issues were highlighted in the exhibition *Mind and Spirit- Women's Art in Taiwan* (1998), the first large-scale genealogy of the development of women's art in Taiwan.⁸⁹⁰ The curator of 'Sexuality and Power' (in *Quest for Identity*), Hsieh Tung-shan, also acknowledges the effects of gender discrimination and notes the disproportionate ratio of female artists to male artists in Taiwan. However, he attributes these factors to women's lack of self-awareness and the power structure of patriarchal society in Taiwan.⁸⁹¹ This is, however, somewhat ironic since Wu had accused Hsieh, along with some of the other male curators involved in *Quest for Identity*, of subjugating and sexualizing women artists' works in this exhibition, including her own.

issues were publicly and critically debated. See Lu, 'The Rise of Feminist Awareness', *n.paradoxa*, July/Sept 2001 and July 2002, p.37.

⁸⁸⁸ Victoria Lu, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁸⁸⁹ Lu, 'The Rise of Feminist Awareness', *n.paradoxa*, July/Sept 2001 and July 2002, p.44.

⁸⁹⁰ The challenges women artists have and continue to face in Taiwan were discussed in detail and from different perspectives in the exhibition catalogue essays. See for example, the curator, Lai Ying-ying's essay (on the history of women's art); Ku Yen-lin (on the status of women in Taiwan society); Wang Ya-ko (on the women's art movement); Victoria Lu (on art education in post-war Taiwan), *Mind and Spirit*, TFAM, 1998 (in Chinese with abstracts in English).

⁸⁹¹ Hsieh, 'Gender and Power', *Modern Art*, 1996, pp.25-27 (in Chinese).

In one of my interviews with Wu, the artist certainly did not reject the 'feminist' label;⁸⁹² however, as Chen Hsiang-chun pointed out, she rarely defines her art as 'feminist'.⁸⁹³ Nevertheless, art historians, critics, and curators often define and categorise her work in feminist terms. This is misleading given that the artist explores a vast range of issues including, but not restricted to, feminism. While most of the literature on Wu Mali remarks positively on Wu's contribution to feminism, it is noteworthy that many writers (mostly women) comment on Wu's appearance, and particularly on her European fashion-sense.⁸⁹⁴ To my knowledge, similar comments have seldom, if ever, been directed at male artists; effectively they define Wu Mali as 'Other'. Arguably, these comments reflect the conflicted nature of feminism today and not only in Taiwan, but also more widely.

In 1998, the Japanese curator Fumio Nanjo invited Wu Mali to participate in the Taipei Biennial, *Site of Desire*,⁸⁹⁵ for which she created the *Formosa Club* (fig. 5.8), and its visual display in this exhibition was discussed in Chapter Two.⁸⁹⁶ Conceptually, this work re-engaged with issues explored in *Epitaph*, relating to the (overlooked) roles of women in Taiwan's history, but here these issues are explored in relation to the exhibition theme of 'desire' and the commodification of women through history. As already noted, this work was a life-size three-dimensional replica of a love hotel, replete with soft and

⁸⁹² Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2009, Taipei.

⁸⁹³ Chen Hsiang-chun, 'Wu Mali: My Skin', in *Wu Mali: Treasure Island*, 2002, pp. 7, 9; Yang Wen-I, 'A Banana is not a Banana: The New Women Artists of Taiwan,' in *Asian Women Artists*, Dinah Dysart and Hannah Fink (eds.), Craftsman House, Sydney, 1996, p.48.

⁸⁹⁴ For example, Fu Chia-wen Lien describes her appearance as 'contemporary' (noting the artist's fondness for 'short hair-cuts, tight black pants and dark-rimmed glasses'); and Hu Yung-fen notes her unusual fashion sense. See Lien, 'Mali Wu', *ArtNews*, 1995, p.227; Hu, Yung-fen. 從單純美感需求到內在深層需求—吳瑪俐：我不覺得自己需要去掌握一個形體 ('From Pure Aesthetic Need to Deep Inside Need-Wu Mali: I Don't Think I Need to Grasp a Form'), 典藏 (Collection), Aug. 1995, p.166 (in Chinese). Pai comments on her 'remote and unemotional nature', Maggie Pai, 'Making the Visible Invisible', *Asian Art News*, March/April 1998, p.62.

⁸⁹⁵ Wu was selected as one of thirty-six artists from North-East Asia. See Chapter Two for more information on this exhibition.

⁸⁹⁶ See Chapter Two p.127.

seductive lighting in the interior, and on the external wall a 'menu' was displayed for viewers to read. On this 'menu', which would customarily advertise the different types of rooms available, the artist wrote an abridged history of female sexual labour in Taiwan: from the 'comfort women' during Japanese colonisation, to the rise of capitalism and sex tourism. This historical account is written from the perspective of the sex-worker who is represented in the collective first person by the word 'we'. In one of the first entries, for example, Wu describes how the Mainlanders, who came to Taiwan during the Qing Dynasty, 'missed female companionship' and how 'we comforted their wandering souls'. *Formosa Club* explores how these women have contributed towards Taiwan's economic development and is intended as a counter-narrative to the positive and celebratory accounts of Taiwan's modernisation.⁸⁹⁷ As Shih Shu-mei perceptively remarks about this work,

The grand narratives of the nation, be it the colonist, the Nationalist, or the Taiwanese hide behind them the blood and sweat of the most unspeakable form of labour. Recuperating this history thus exposes the hypocrisy of the national and economic narratives of Taiwan's success.⁸⁹⁸

Stories from Women in Hsinchuang (1997) (figs. 5.9 & 5.10) similarly reflects a feminist outlook, focusing on the role of women in the development of Taiwan's labour economy and its Economic Miracle, which, as Wu emphasises, has traditionally been viewed in masculine terms.⁸⁹⁹ In this work Wu collaborates with women employed in the textile factories on the outskirts of Taipei, in Hsinchuang (Xinzhuang), an important industrial hub housing most of Taiwan's textile industries before they moved to China. Akin to *Epitaph*, Wu draws upon the medium of oral history, but on this occasion she interviews these women personally rather than relying on secondary sources. In this audio-visual installation, these unrecognised women are given a voice. They speak for themselves rather than being spoken for, and their individual

⁸⁹⁷ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2009, Taipei.

⁸⁹⁸ Shih, *Visuality and Identity*, 2007, p.177.

⁸⁹⁹ She comments that in most statistical information about the national economy and labour force, only men are mentioned, and labour generally is generally defined as male. Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2009, Taipei.

identities are clearly revealed, rather than being represented as an indistinguishable collective. In this installation these women's accounts of what it was like working in these factories were visually projected on a freestanding wall; and their words were punctuated and overlaid with the monotonous sounds of sewing machines permeating the space. Furthermore, their stories were 'written into' the purple fabric covering the adjoining walls. Sewn, in fine black thread and in Chinese text, they seemed appropriately to bleed into the purple fabric. The artist says, 'I felt the women's lives, so interwoven in the textile industry, were re-woven in the cloth and their lives.'⁹⁰⁰ Her intention was to encourage the audience to reflect on these women's experiences, working in the factories and raising children; the sex discrimination they encountered, and how they coped after losing their jobs with the demise of the textile industry in Hsinchuang.⁹⁰¹

Wu's work was presented as part of a group exhibition entitled *Lord of the Rim: in Himself/for Herself* (1998) curated by Chang Yuan-chien (Rita Chang 張元茜) at the local Hsinchuang Cultural Centre. It displayed women artists' works not only from Taiwan, but also from Japan and Korea.⁹⁰² Notably, it also featured a work by the internationally acclaimed American artist Judy Chicago who played a pioneering role in the development of the feminist art movement in America during the 1970s, and for her collaborative installation *The Dinner Party* (1974-79).⁹⁰³ Chicago's visit to Taiwan was eagerly anticipated.⁹⁰⁴

⁹⁰⁰ Pai, 'Making the Visible Invisible', *Asian Art News*, 1998, p.62. Also see Wu Mali, 'Artist Statement', in *Lord of the Rim: in Himself/for Herself*, Hsinchuang Cultural Centre, 1998, p.41 (in Chinese).

⁹⁰¹ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei. Chen, 'Wu Mali', in *Gravity of the Immaterial*, 2001, p.147.

⁹⁰² These artists included: Wu Mali, Lin Chun-ju, Lulu Shur-tzy Hou, and Maggie Wei Hsu (from Taiwan); Ahn Pil-Yun (Korea); Shimada Yoshiko (Japan).

⁹⁰³ In this exhibition, Chicago presented a pre-existing painting from her *Birth Project* entitled *Earth Birth EU #22* (1983) which Chicago chose because it responded to the theme of 'collective creativity' explored in the exhibition. Pai, 'Making the Visible Invisible', *Asian Art News*, 1998, pp.63, 65.

⁹⁰⁴ The Curator invited Chicago to Taiwan for the exhibition and to participate in lectures and seminars organised around the event. A solo exhibition of Chicago's work was held concurrently at Hanart (Taipei) and Chicago also launched her autobiography, *Beyond the*

However, in the event, Wu, along with several other artists associated with the exhibition, were ultimately underwhelmed by Chicago and by her apparent lack of interest both in this exhibition and their struggle for gender equality and recognition.⁹⁰⁵ In my conversation with Chicago during her visit, she conceded she had indeed lost touch with some feminist issues, but emphasised her willingness to continue to share conversations with women and support their struggle.⁹⁰⁶ It is worthy to note that, according to art journalist Maggie Pai, despite Chicago's international profile, and the high audience visitation to this exhibition within the local community, the exhibition did not attract significant media attention.⁹⁰⁷

In my view, this particular work marked a significant turning point in Wu's artistic trajectory signalling more collaborative work with local communities, both in Taiwan and overseas. Subsequently Wu developed a series of works that relied on public participation and were generally site-specific, exploring the relationship between the individual and society. For example, in 1996, during the lead-up to the Hong Kong handover, the artist worked with members of the public in Hong Kong to create *Collective Dreams*.⁹⁰⁸ In essence, this ephemeral work comprised approximately 5,000 handmade paper boats, upon each of which contributors had inscribed their future dreams and desires. These paper boats were first shown in the Hong Kong Art Centre and were subsequently released onto the waters of Hong Kong's Victoria

Flower: the Autobiography of a Feminist Artist. Chicago was also invited to visit China to curate and collaborate with the Long March group on a feminist art activity staged at Lagu Lake in Yunnan province. Chicago proposed the theme 'If Women Ruled the World' but as Welland's article highlights there were some problems with the ways this project developed. See Sasha S. Welland, 'The Long March to Lugu Lake: A Dialogue with Judy Chicago', *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, vol. 1, no. 3, Nov. 2002, pp.69-75.

⁹⁰⁵ Wu recalls she was 'disappointed' when she met Chicago though she adds that Chicago may have had the wrong impression that they were 'wanting to use her name to promote their exhibition', Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2009, Taipei.

⁹⁰⁶ Judy Chicago, Conversation with the Author, 1998, Taipei.

⁹⁰⁷ Pai notes this was in part due to the distance to travel to Hsinchuang from Taipei. Pai, 'Making the Visible Invisible', *Asian Art News*, 1998, p.66.

⁹⁰⁸ This work was commissioned as part of the *Out of White Space* Hong Kong Art Festival in Feb. 1996.

Harbour.⁹⁰⁹ JJ Shih observes that Wu's work gave visual expression to the collective sense of 'unease' in Hong Kong prior to the hand-over and certainly, as a participatory work, it engendered a sense of collective consciousness.⁹¹⁰ In relation to the process involved in making this work, Wu states, 'the creator [I] would step back, then let the masses [the collective they] take over and finish the collaboration.' She adds that working with the public enabled her to distance herself from the 'museum-gallery-collector' art system, which she had critiqued in earlier works.⁹¹¹

Following *Collective Dreams* the artist created a further series of participatory works using a similar methodology. These included *Follow the Dreamboat* (fig. 5.11) in which the artist collaborated with local communities in Kaohsiung in 2001 and a later work in San Francisco in 2004. In *House of Fishermen* (2005) the artist worked with coastal and island communities in France (Dieppe) and Japan (Fukuoka), inviting participants to share with the artist their thoughts and experiences of the sea. In Japan, for example, she collaborated with communities living in the harbor-side city of Fukuoka, and focused on the shared cultural significance of Matsu (媽祖, or Mazu), the Goddess of the Sea, worshipped predominantly in China, Taiwan and in parts of Southern and Eastern Asia, as well as Japan.⁹¹² Participants' responses were revealed through interviews, stories, images, and objects the artist collected, compiled, and displayed in site-specific locations in these countries. As I have discussed elsewhere,⁹¹³ the sea and, increasingly, the land are recurring themes in Wu's work as she explores the relationship between the human condition and the natural environment in different cultural contexts. In *Islanded: Contemporary*

⁹⁰⁹ For the artist's account on the background and process of this work see Deepwell, 'Mali Wu', *n.paradoxa*, 1997, pp.47-48 (online).

⁹¹⁰ JJ Shih, 'Images of Hong Kong Made in Taiwan', *Art Asia Pacific*, no. 15, 1997, p.58.

⁹¹¹ Deepwell, 'Mali Wu', *n.paradoxa*, 1997, p.49 (online).

⁹¹² In Japan, Matsu is referred to as *Tenpi*, a transliteration of the Chinese word *Tian Fei* (天妃, literally 'Heavenly Princess Consort').

⁹¹³ See Sophie McIntyre on 'Wu Mali', in *Islanded: Contemporary Art from New Zealand, Singapore and Taiwan*, Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore (ICAS), Singapore, 2005, p.54.

Art from New Zealand, Singapore and Taiwan (2005), an exhibition I co-curated, Wu presented a video entitled *Rite on Water* (2003) in which the artist visually documented the ritualistic burning of small paper boats on Keelung Harbour during 'The Ghost Festival', colloquially known as 'Ghost Month' (鬼月). Importantly, in these collaborative and ephemeral projects, notions of identity and 'place' are fluid and unstable, defined by the individual in relation to the site, rather than by the country or nation.

According to the artist, *Secret Garden* (1999) (fig. 5.12) marked a critical turning point in her artistic trajectory as it was the first work she created in Taiwan where 'there was no opposition' and when she discovered the true meaning of 'formless art'.⁹¹⁴ Working outside the confines of the museum, Wu employed labourers to dig a long corridor-like hole into the earth into which the audience could freely walk. In this cavity, which was bordered by a wall of stones, a cluster of colourful flowers blossomed. The artist says she wanted to make something 'beautiful' that did not include artificial materials and transcended binaries and dissolved form.⁹¹⁵ Since this time Wu has worked, both as a curator, educator, and artist, on a number of environmental projects with artists and local community members in rural regions of Taiwan. Seeking to expand and challenge artistic conventions, she claims that working with the public has given her a new understanding of the meaning and function of art.

It is clear from the evidence presented here that Wu Mali has made a significant and distinctive contribution towards Taiwan's identity discourse. Not only were her critiques based on a feminist viewpoint that set her apart from her peers, but she combined the visual image and text in innovative ways that offered a new perspective and challenged conventional readings of identity. During the 1990s her installations engaged in a range of socio-political topics, which she critically analysed in relation to the nexus between

⁹¹⁴ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁹¹⁵ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

politics and power. Drawing on the popular feminist phrase 'the personal is political', I have demonstrated how Wu's art during this period revolved around the intersection between society and the individual, and between public and private realms. The analysis of works here has revealed how she used her art as a vehicle for consciousness-raising, as a form of political action to engender democratisation and social reform and ultimately elicit debate about history, gender, and the environment.

By the end of the twentieth century, Wu's artistic practice shifted from one inspired by a passionate desire for democratisation and socio-political reform to a more self-reflexive participatory-based art practice. Wu says she came to the realisation that she could not resolve the 'dualism between politics and power', implying that she felt unable, as an individual female artist, to make any substantial or meaningful contribution towards Taiwan's national identity debate which she believed was inherently conflict-ridden, discriminatory and parochial. Hence, the artist withdrew from 'the front-line action', as Victoria Lu describes it,⁹¹⁶ in order to explore broader social and environmental issues that had local and global significance:

My work has always been about this dualism – but sometimes when you show more duality then you reinforce it – so you have to find another way [...] There are bigger and more long-term issues relating to people and the environment that we need to take care of. Generally Taiwan is a democratic country, and there are other issues going on in the world so my work changes to this direction.⁹¹⁷

This change of focus reflected and corresponded with the broader paradigm shift in Taiwan's art field as artists, including Wu Mali, turned their attention to the effects of globalisation on the environment, society and the individual. While Wu clearly remains committed to local issues, as evidenced here, her art practice has over time become more socially rather than politically-driven, transcending identity politics and national boundaries and focusing on issues that affect humankind.

⁹¹⁶ Lu, 'Striving for a Cultural Identity', in *Inside Out*, 1998, p.170.

⁹¹⁷ Wu Mali, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.



Figure 5.1: *Time Space II*, 1988, mixed media installation (at the former Taiwan Province Museum of Fine Arts now National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts)



Figure 5.2: *Love to the Highest Point*, 1990, mixed media installation



Figures 5.3 & 5.4: Taipei Fine Arts Motel, 1996 (top to bottom) advertisement & performance



Figure 5.5: *Fake – The Empty Ruse*, 1994, installation (at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum)

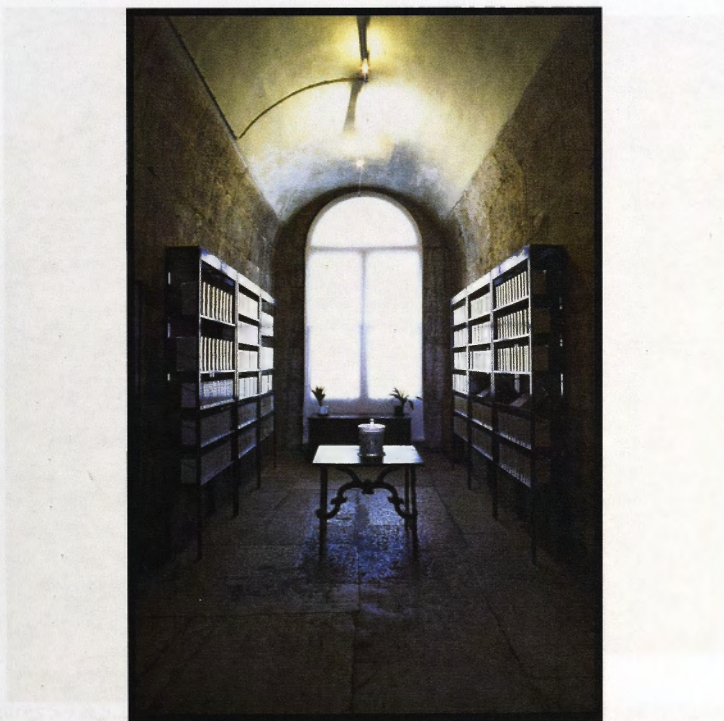


Figure 5.6: *The Library*, 1995, mixed media installation (Venice Biennale, 1995)



Figure 5.7: *Epitaph*, 1997, audio-visual installation (at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum)



Figure 5.8: *Formosa Club*, 1998, mixed media installation (at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum)



Figures 5.9 & 5.10: *Stories of Women from Hsinchuang*, 1997, audio-visual installation
(top to bottom) installation at Hsinchuang Cultural Centre; detail



Figure 5.11: *Follow the Dreamboat*, 2002 (installation at the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts)



Figure 5.12: *Secret Garden*, 1999 (installation at Nantou County)

CHAPTER SIX

The Nation De-mythologised – YAO JUI-CHUNG

Born in 1969, artist, writer and curator, Yao Jui-chung (姚瑞中) emerged on the local art scene in the early 1990s, and his satirical and often subversive artworks are often regarded as emblematic of the post-martial law generation.⁹¹⁸ This generation, defined as 'Generation X',⁹¹⁹ grew up during a period of unprecedented political and socio-cultural change, when Taiwan transformed from a one-party state into a democratised, economically prosperous and culturally pluralistic society. Unlike his predecessors, such as Mei Dean-E, Yang Mao-lin and Wu Mali who were all born in the 1950s,⁹²⁰ Yao was too young to have directly experienced the more repressive effects of martial law, or to have participated in the democratisation movement. Furthermore, with the relaxation of restrictions on the media and the growth of the internet and digital media, Yao did not feel compelled to go overseas in search of creative freedom, as did Mei and Wu in the 1980s. It is the contention of this chapter that this generational distinction not only sets Yao apart from the three other artists but is fundamental to an understanding of his art and views on Taiwan's identity and its place in the world.

In the first part of this chapter these generational distinctions are explored in relation to Yao's family heritage and artistic background which provide a valuable insight into and context for some of his most significant artworks examined here. These include *Roaming the Ruins* (1990-2005), *Territory Takeover* (1994), *Recover Mainland China* (1994-6), *Long March-Shifting the Universe* (2003), *World is For All* (1997-2000) and his more recent series of

⁹¹⁸ Shih Rae-jen (JI Shih), 從〈拒絕〉中出發的新世代 ('New Generation Starting From "Refusal"'), 藝術家 (*Artist*), no.256, Sept. 1996, pp.202-206 (in Chinese); Hsu Wen-rei, 'Faces of Time: Two Generations of Taiwan Contemporary Art', in *Face to Face: Contemporary Art from Taiwan*, 1999, pp.17-19; Yu Wei, 'Man Amid the Ruins: Yao Jui-chung', in *Yao Jui-chung*, Garden City Publishing, Taipei, 2008, pp. 184-191.

⁹¹⁹ 'Generation X' generally refers to people born from the early 1960s to the early 1980s.

⁹²⁰ See Chapters Three, Four and Five

paintings. Combining photography, performance and installation, Yao's work explores notions of history, identity and memory through the twin lens of politics and power. While the artist was an advocate of Taiwan consciousness, he did not use art as a vehicle to promote Taiwan's identity. In fact, I argue that he purposefully set out to ridicule official nationalist discourses that called attention to the nation which he perceived to be a politically invented construct. As a young artist whose parents were Chinese and Taiwanese, Yao's views on identity were more fluid and less oppositional than those of some of his older peers whose works Yao characterises as 'negative' and 'sad'.⁹²¹ In contrast, Yao employed parody and humour to critique notions of identity, playfully highlighting the 'absurdities' of Taiwan's history and relationship with China.⁹²²

Yao's generation has been described by some art curators and critics as wilful, cynical, politically disinterested and self-centred.⁹²³ Certainly, his views on identity are individualistic and his works challenged official nationalist discourses and artistic conventions. Based on my longstanding academic and curatorial association with the artist, this chapter contends that Yao has made a significant contribution to Taiwan's identity discourse. In fact, Yao continued to explore identity issues and the roles of history and myth-making, as subjects of enduring interest well into the new millennium and long after contemporary artists' attention had turned elsewhere.

⁹²¹ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

⁹²² Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 10/9/1998, Taipei.

⁹²³ Victoria Lu, for example, compares the older generation's 'strong national consciousness' and their 'distinct political stand' with the younger generations who have been more preoccupied with individualistic concerns and to whom 'traditional culture, politics, social institutions... [and] history... don't mean much'. Lu, 'Curatorial Words', in *Visions of Pluralism: Contemporary Art in Taiwan 1988-1999*, Mountain Art, Culture and Education Foundation, Kaohsiung, 1999, p.16. Also see, Amy Huei-hua Cheng, 'Finding Power of the Powerless in Dazzling Glitter: On Yao Jui-Chung and his works', in *Yao Jui-chung*, Garden City Publishing, Taipei, 2008, pp.174-183.

Notwithstanding his significant artistic output and his national and international reputation, there has neither been a sustained nor in-depth critical analysis undertaken of Yao's work and his role in Taiwan's identity discourse. Arguably, for this reason, the artist has published several books and catalogues of his own work, including essays written by art critics and curators, some of which are utilised here. My research, however, relies principally on primary information gleaned from personal interviews conducted with the artist over a more than a decade. Analyses of these data demonstrate that Yao's individualism, irreverence, and open-minded outlook exemplify not only generational change, but also a wider paradigm shift in the art field. The impact of globalisation, the internet and increased mobility, along with the global ascent of China, gave rise to conceptions of identity no longer limited by the nation.

A 'new' generational outlook

Local art writers and curators view Yao's generation as existing 'in-between' two different phases in Taiwan's history, symbolically-demarcated by the lifting of martial law.⁹²⁴ Born in the 1960s, this generation experienced the collapse of authoritarian rule, the rise of political and cultural pluralism and unprecedented economic prosperity. Long-established ideological and belief systems were contested and supplanted by new ideas, values and practices both local and global, and focused on the individual rather than the national collective. The growth of the mass media and consumerism opened up a vast array of possibilities and challenges for this generation simultaneously attempting to make sense of rapid changes while seeking to compete and forge new pathways no longer constrained by traditional or conventional values and beliefs.

⁹²⁴ Amy Huei-hua Cheng (Cheng Amy Huei-hua), 'On the Road: Ten Years of Yao Jui-chung's Artistic Practice', in *Yao Jui-chung*, 2008, pp.15-17; Lee Wei-jing, 創作是心情反芻的發表-姚瑞中 ('Creating is to reflect the Mood - Yao Jui-chung'), *Artist*, Nov. 1999, pp.449-457 (in Chinese); Hsu Wen-rei, 'When History is Beside itself - On Yao Jui-chung's Recent Works', in *Introduction to Taiwan's Contemporary Art: Yao Jui-chung Solo Exhibition*, MOMA Contemporary, Fukuoka, Aug. 1998, n.p.

As acknowledged in the Introduction, in 1999 I curated an exhibition entitled *Face to Face: Contemporary Art from Taiwan* which explored the ways in which eight artists from this 'thirty-something' generation in Taiwan were responding visually to these significant socio-political, economic and cultural changes. Yao was among the eight contemporary artists whose works were selected for this touring exhibition which featured more than thirty works in a range of media.⁹²⁵ The overarching aim of the exhibition was to challenge and transcend essentialist notions of 'Taiwanese' art by highlighting the aesthetic and conceptual breadth and depth of works by individual artists from this younger generation.⁹²⁶ One of Yao's works from this exhibition, *World is for All*, is discussed in detail later in this chapter as are his views on identity issues, art and the contribution he made to this generational shift.

For Yao the lifting of martial law signified a new epoch in Taiwan's history. He called on his generation of artists to develop 'a new aesthetics' that would reflect the spirit of the times while also transcending the cultural dichotomies and the oppositional logic of previous generations. In a manifesto entitled 'New Human Species', Yao declaims:

"Chinese Knowledge as Core, Western Knowledge as Application" should be abandoned by the new generation [...] In a diverse, tumult (sic) and materially tempting world, the art career for artists will be especially frustrating. They will not only have to find a new aesthetics reflecting their time but also will have to arm themselves up to face the rebellions from the world as well as from their own mind. The rebellions from both sides have shaped the personality of the New Human Species.⁹²⁷

⁹²⁵ The exhibition displayed selected works from his series: *Beyond Blue Sky and Chinatown*.

⁹²⁶ More information on this exhibition and on the artists in this exhibition is available in the exhibition and in catalogue essays by myself and Hsu, in *Face to Face*, 1999, pp. 12-14; 17-19.

⁹²⁷ Yao Jui-chung, 新醒人類 ('New Human Species'), *Dragon Art* (炎黃藝術), no.80, July, 1996, pp. 51-53 (in Chinese).

During the 1990s, Yao often employed the term 'New Human Species' (新腥人類)⁹²⁸ to refer to his generation and its opportunities and challenges. This term derives from 'New New Humans' (新新人類) that gained currency in Taiwan and East Asia more generally in the late twentieth century. Victoria Lu describes the 'New New Humans' as:

...Astute, cool-headed, a fast-food lover, a hedonist, changeable, easily moved, embracing the era in which you live. You wouldn't have the scars or burdens of history weighing you down [...].⁹²⁹

As the scholar Jing Wang points out, in China the term 'New New Humans' is associated with urban youth and popular culture, and the rise of digital technology and consumerism.⁹³⁰ However, according to Yao's more critical and culturally specific interpretation of this term, the 'New Human Species' is less about hedonism, fashion or technology than it is about proposing a new way of thinking and a 'new aesthetics' that reflects the *zeitgeist* and awareness of the world as a whole.⁹³¹ Elaborating on this concept during interviews, the artist emphasised the importance of *identity consciousness* which he distinguishes from the term *identity*. The former he defines as an expression of the *essence* of one's self, and self-awareness so central to the artist. By contrast, according to Yao, *identity* is a political concept based on exclusive and imagined notions of citizenship and belonging. This distinction underpins Yao's work and is

⁹²⁸ Yao has deliberately replaced the character 新 (new, *xin*) with 腥 (blood/flesh, *xing*) which sound the same phonetically and refer to the idea of a species.

⁹²⁹ Victoria Lu, 'What is Beyond the Canvas? The Aesthetic Speculations of Yao Jui-chung', *People*, Taipei, March 1994, pp.154-155.

⁹³⁰ According to Jing Wang the term 新新人類 (*Xin Xin Renlei*), or 'Neo-neo tribe', is a transliteration of the Japanese term *shin jinrui* and the term was introduced to China via Hong Kong and Taiwan. Jing Wang (Wang Jing), 'Bourgeois Bohemians in China? Neo-Tribes and the Urban Imaginary', *Culture in Contemporary China* (special issue), *China Quarterly*, no. 6, 2005, pp. 23-25.

⁹³¹ This generation is also known colloquially by the equally ambiguous term, 'Fifth Grade' which Amy Cheng distinguishes from the term 'post-martial law generation' - the latter refers to the 'structural transformation of Taiwan's political and social milieu', whereas the former relates to the 'significant shift in moral, political, social and cultural values'. Cheng, 'On the Road', in *Yao Jui-chung*, 2008, p.15.

exemplified in his statement: 'We must first have consciousness (主體意識, *zhu ti yishi*) then we can know our identity'.⁹³²

Yao's views on identity, and his desire to sever connections with the past, have been significantly influenced by his background and artistic training. Yao was born and raised in Taiwan and identifies as *Taiwanese* although he also has blood connections with China. His mother is Taiwanese while his father, who was an officer in the KMT Army, came from China.⁹³³ This mixed heritage is most common amongst people born after 1960, and this fact, along with generational change and globalisation, contributed to the collapse of native-foreign binaries, and to less fixed conceptions of identity in Taiwan. For his part Yao rejected simplistic and over-determined notions of identity based on ethnicity and political ideology. Reflecting on his family origins and identity, Yao circumspectly observes, 'if people ask are you Chinese or Taiwanese most people say Taiwanese. I'm not sure. Maybe I am Chinese and Taiwanese'.⁹³⁴ Arguably, it was this ambiguity about his origins and the myths generated about China that inspired him to investigate the meaning and power mechanisms underpinning Taiwan's identity discourse.

Paradoxically, notwithstanding Yao's discarding of the past, a significant number of artworks he created between the years 1988 and 2008 focused on Taiwan's history. According to Yao, in order to know oneself and attain identity consciousness, it is necessary to know one's history which he regards as 'the process and exploration of identity'.⁹³⁵ In this context it is important to note that Yao's generation was the last to have been educated under the KMT's

⁹³² Yao Jui-chung, Interview with Author, 21/7/1998, Taipei.

⁹³³ Yao's mother was from Taichung. His father was originally from Jiangsu province and had two wives. He was a soldier in the KMT until he resigned and became a lawyer and later a member of the City Council. Yao has eight step-siblings – most live in China and some in the United States. Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 10/9/1998, Taipei; and Yao Jui-chung, E-mail to Author, 9 Nov. 2009.

⁹³⁴ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

⁹³⁵ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

system in which students learned Chinese history, but only up to the year 1949 when the Chinese Communists gained power; Taiwan's history was only introduced as a discipline in the late 1980s. In an interview with Ron Hanson, a New Zealand art writer based in Taiwan, Yao reportedly said:

I received the national education that was compulsory in Taiwan at the time. One day I realised our familiar history textbook was filled with lies and tended to avoid difficult issues while emphasising trivial ones. This realisation, in addition to my father's death, made me both suspicious and curious about my own origins, of which I was completely ignorant.⁹³⁶

In 1996, after completing his military service, Yao visited China for the first time. He discovered the realities of China did not correspond to the mythical image of China, the 'Motherland', about which he had learnt at school. For Yao, this trip to China triggered a critical breakthrough, personally and artistically, as he began to reflect more deeply on his origins, education and, on a broader level, the relationships between politics, ideology, history and memory. Certainly, Yao's experience of China was shared by many people from Taiwan, and by the broader Chinese diaspora who returned to 'the Motherland' only to recognise their alien status.⁹³⁷ Recalling the overwhelming sense of displacement he felt in China, the artist reflects:

I was a tourist. I never touched the land even though it's the Motherland. I go everywhere but I never land there. I don't have too much feeling – even though my father came from China. I wanted to see my [step] brother and [step] sister but I decided later I didn't want to see them. It's a tragedy and it's very common in Taiwan. My father never went back either.⁹³⁸

In the early 1990s, when Yao was at art school, he created his first political works which examined the concept of historical truth in relation to notions of power, authority, knowledge and belief. These explore the 'shadow' or 'ghost' of history, which refers metaphorically to the darker, ignored and overlooked

⁹³⁶ Yao Jui-chung cited in Ron Hanson, 'Everything Will Fall Into Ruins – an Interview with Yao Jui-chung', *Afterall Online*, Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design, London, 6/9/2011. <http://afterall.org/online/artist-at-work-yao-jui-chung/> (accessed 7/8/2012). Yao also discusses his education and prior lack of knowledge of Taiwan in Lee Wei-jing, 'Creating is to Reflect the Mood', *Artist*, 1999, pp.449-457 (in Chinese).

⁹³⁷ This issue of belonging is evocatively explored in an Australian-Chinese diasporic context in the novel by Shen Yuanfang entitled *Dragon Seed in the Antipodes: Chinese-Australian Autobiographies*, University of Melbourne Press, Melbourne, 2001.

⁹³⁸ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 10/9/1998, Taipei.

aspects of history and tradition, an important recurring theme in Yao's work. Initially, in some of his earliest paintings collectively titled *Exploded Metropolis (I-V)* (1990), the shadow literally appears lurking behind corners, projected upon walls and juxtaposed against traditional motifs and symbols from Chinese culture. In *Untitled* (1990) and *Divine Providence* (1990) the shadow acquires political and historical significance, as China and Taiwan's former political leaders, Mao Zedong and Chiang Kai-shek, are juxtaposed and distorted. In *Untitled* Mao's head has been split open and miniature Chinese scholars peer out from the former leader's gaping skull. On the right side of the image, Chiang Kai-shek is depicted with four eyes, and a halo drawn around his head parodies his 'god-like mythical status.'⁹³⁹

Between 1990 and 1994, Yao attended the National Institute of Arts (國立藝術學院).⁹⁴⁰ During the 1990s this art school was the most progressive in Taiwan, and trained many contemporary artists. Yao majored in art theory which, he explains, was 'never really taught' at that time as art schools mainly focused on art history, focusing on Western and pre-twentieth century Chinese art.⁹⁴¹ Courses in Taiwan art history were offered in some art schools in the early 1990s, but Yao says 'none of the teachers really knew it' because they themselves had only learnt about China's history.⁹⁴² In regards to his artwork, Yao recalls his teachers' responses to his expressionistic paintings being less than encouraging:⁹⁴³ 'they think we should do painting from traditional

⁹³⁹ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁹⁴⁰ In 2001 it was re-named National Taipei University of the Arts (國立臺北藝術大學) or NTUA. It was originally founded in 1982 and was moved to its purpose-built campus in Kuandu in 1991.

⁹⁴¹ Yao says prior to going to art school he was already experimenting with different art materials and was reading about contemporary art in *Lion Art* magazine at high school. He also studied minimalism and object art; and in the field of art criticism he studied John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*. Yao Jui-chung, Interview with Author, 1995.

⁹⁴² Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 10/9/1998, Taipei. The introduction of Taiwan art courses was also discussed in the Introduction (p.29) and Chapter One p.67.

⁹⁴³ One of his teachers purportedly advised him not to submit one of his paintings for a competition because he thought it 'too avant-garde and too aggressive'. Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

treasures – but I was not influenced by them [...] arts function is to search for something new and be free of the past'.⁹⁴⁴

Seeking to experiment with new forms of media, in 1992 the artist co-founded and was a member for five years of the 'Ta Na Experimental Group' (天打那實驗體), a theatre collective comprising fellow students. During this period he developed a strong interest in performance and role playing which significantly informed his art practice.⁹⁴⁵ In 1992, he produced a performance art piece entitled *Energy, Movement, Light and Body* in which he employed new media technologies to explore the relationship between body, time and space.⁹⁴⁶ Yao's desire to experiment and develop a new aesthetic echoes comments made by installation artist Wu Mali who, as discussed in Chapter Five, was also critical of the pre-eminence of painting in Taiwan.⁹⁴⁷ Yao observes that,

...at that time we don't like painting and realism as it's very traditional. We want to use a more aggressive style. The 1990s was a new age in Taiwan - the art world had grown and you can see any kinds of art, not just painting or sculpture.⁹⁴⁸

As emphasised in the 'New Human Species' manifesto, Yao believed artists must respond to the *zeitgeist* and, in 1991, abandoned painting and began to experiment with photography and installation.⁹⁴⁹ During one of his many mountain hiking expeditions, the artist created a series of photographic-based environmental interventions. The first of these, a series entitled *Middle* (1991-1993) (fig. 6.1), visually explores the conceptual relationship between site,

⁹⁴⁴ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 21/7/1998, Taipei.

⁹⁴⁵ Yao says he is not interested in performing in front of an audience but he wanted to communicate to the audience and do something everyone can do, like handstands or jumping which he repeatedly does in later works. Yao, Email to the Author, 9 Nov. 2009

⁹⁴⁶ Yao also collaborated on several other productions including 'The Death of Utopia' (1992) and 'The Hamlet Machine' (1992-3).

⁹⁴⁷ See Chapter Five p.259.

⁹⁴⁸ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁹⁴⁹ Yao says that he had been interested in photography since high school but he only began learning photographic darkroom skills at art school. In 1992 Yao won the Taipei Young Photographer Art Prize. Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei; Email to the Author, 9 Nov. 2009.

space and time. In these abstracted images, the camera lens is purposively tilted towards the sky at an object floating in space – such as a handmade aircraft made of silver foil. Silver and also gold foil became recurring media used in this artist's work; and the skyward perspective re-emerged in later works, including *Recover Mainland China*, in which the artist himself became the object floating in space. These black and white images have a stark and ethereal quality and visually express a 'cold detachment' from reality⁹⁵⁰ in which there is no sense of place or time.

Another environmental intervention created during this formative period was *Melt, Permeate, Crystal Measurement* (1993) (fig. 6.2) in which the artist explores notions of identity, history and tradition in relation to the concept of the land. As a visual parody on the Chinese landscape tradition of ink painting (*shanshui*, lit. mountain and water) the artist painted a line of black ink into a blanket of virgin white snow on the mountain. The ink-stained snow was collected and siphoned into a small coke bottle. According to the artist, the black ink, coke bottle, and the physical site, signify the 'three polarities: Chinese tradition, Western influence, and localism' which, together, Yao believes have shaped Taiwan's cultural identity.⁹⁵¹ In the final installation two photographic images, depicting the ink-stained site and the coke bottle, were displayed side by side.⁹⁵²

This work was part of the *Land Survey* series which explores the interrelationship between the land and the processes of (de)territorialisation and identity formation. The meaning and significance of the land, as physical and metaphorical space, has been discussed previously;⁹⁵³ and, as these and

⁹⁵⁰ Yao Jui-chung, 'Illusion of Reality a Real Illusion: An Overview of Contemporary Taiwanese Art', *Yishu Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, no. 1, 2002, pp. 20, 25.

⁹⁵¹ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁹⁵² *Melt, Permeate, Crystal Measurement* was shown at New Paradise art space in Taipei in 1994.

⁹⁵³ See Chapter One (pp.85-86) and Chapter Four in relation to Yang Mao-lin's *Made in Taiwan* series.

later works testify, it is a common theme in Yao's work. However, it is important to emphasise that, unlike artists such as Yang Mao-lin, Yao did not set out to recover or represent the land in order to locate Taiwan's aboriginal origins and establish its sovereign status. He viewed it as a symbolic space through which to critically examine the processes of nation-building. He did not view the land as a signifier of 'purity' or cultural authenticity; in fact, as the American academic Timothy Murray points out in his interview with the artist, Yao is more interested in the idea of land as a space of 'contamination' and 'unsiteliness' and this is most clearly reflected in *Roaming the Ruins*.⁹⁵⁴

***Roaming the Ruins*- the spectre of politics and history**

While still at art school Yao embarked on this series, *Roaming the Ruins* (1990-2005) (figs. 6.3 & 6.4), which comprises four photographic projects in which the land is portrayed as a ruin.⁹⁵⁵ In these black and white photographs the artist travels across the island and visually documents dilapidated buildings, including military bunkers that were relics of the Cold War, as well as temples, amusement parks and residences⁹⁵⁶ that have been abandoned. These works are not time specific but span half a century or more, from the Cold War period to more recent histories when the global recession forced the closure of many of Taiwan's manufacturing plants and businesses, which re-located to China. For more than seventeen years the artist obsessively photographed these ruins, creating an archive of over a thousand photographs which were used in several subsequent works.⁹⁵⁷ Although he did not have a specific purpose, Yao says it was the journey itself, and the process of discovering and documenting

⁹⁵⁴ Timothy Murray, 'Unsiteliness and the Archival Event: Timothy Murray Thinks Art with Yao Jui-chung', *Unsitely Aesthetics*, Brandon LaBelle and Maria Miranda (eds.), Errant Bodies Press, Berlin (forthcoming), p.1.

⁹⁵⁵ These four projects which are part of the *Roaming the Ruins* series include: *The Civilization Built by Skeleton* (1990-2005); *Far off Home* (1990-2005); *Gods and Idols Surround the Border* (1990-2005); and *Quiet on the Western Front* (2003-2005).

⁹⁵⁶ These houses and apartments, which included the famous Lincoln Mansions in Taipei County, had been affected by landslides or floods and were deemed unsafe.

⁹⁵⁷ For example, *Barbarians Celestine* (2000), *Savage Paradise* (2000), *Heaven* (2001), *Libido of Death* (2002) *Hell* (2003).

these sites located on the urban fringes of society that was of utmost importance to him. In her essay Amy Cheng describes and categorises Yao's work in relation to his inward quest for self-identity and his outward bound actions which explore Taiwan's history.⁹⁵⁸ In my view, this *Ruins* series intersects these two trajectories as the artist meditates on the concept of existence and notions of reality and illusion, while focusing on broader national issues relating to the land as a visual signifier of Taiwan's 'tragic' history.⁹⁵⁹

These images of empty, weather-beaten industrial buildings, shattered concrete statues and religious deities are devoid of human life, on a metaphysical level reflecting the cycle of life and death. Although not a Buddhist, in his statement about these works, Yao recalls the Buddhist Diamond Sutra: 'a star, a grain of sand, a temple or a ruin – everything is just an idea and a thought that reflects a secret landscape deep in peoples' heart'. He adds, 'although our brief existence is accompanied by decay, the silent ruins may be a symbol of the constant birth and death'.⁹⁶⁰ These images have a raw, tranquil, almost surreal quality. Visually they reflect Yao's conception of these ruins as an outward manifestation of himself and of human existence and he describes them as a 'mirror' into which he gazes only to be confronted by the shadow of his own image.⁹⁶¹

On a corporeal level, *Roaming the Ruins* offers an alternative account of Taiwan's national history. Rather than celebrating the more progressive aspects of modernisation, symbolised by the urban sprawl of modern office blocks and shopping centres, Yao focuses his lens on Taiwan's so-called

⁹⁵⁸ Cheng, 'On the Road', in *Yao Jui-chung*, 2008, p.17.

⁹⁵⁹ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 10/9/1998, Taipei.

⁹⁶⁰ Yao Jui-chung, 'Artist Statement', in *Everything Will Fall to Ruins: Yao Jui-chung*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 2006, p.5.

⁹⁶¹ Yao, 'Artist Statement', in *Everything Will Fall*, 2006, p.5.

'wastelands'.⁹⁶² Thus, he explores Taiwan's marginal spaces and the more troubling aspects of Taiwan's history commonly overlooked in the re-writing of national histories. As scholars including Jeremy E. Taylor and Joseph R. Allen contend, Taiwan's national heritage and its built-environment are a visual manifestation of Taiwan's turbulent political history. They demonstrate how successive political regimes have radically altered Taiwan's urban landscape, including its public buildings, statues and monuments which have either been reclaimed, re-named or erased according to the prevailing political ideology.⁹⁶³ The ruins depicted in these images are located on the urban periphery and are deemed to have little historical significance. Consequently, they have largely been ignored which, as Yao pointedly remarks, is analogous to Taiwan's marginal political status in the world.⁹⁶⁴ This series, however, is not a visual commentary on Taiwan's struggle for national identity but rather seeks to shed light on the ghosts and darker shadows in Taiwan's history.

Although these works are not amongst Yao's most visually spectacular or widely exhibited,⁹⁶⁵ the *Ruins* series is nevertheless significant in the context of Yao's art practice. It was the precursor to several other works, including *Beyond the Physical State* (1998), *Barbarians Celestine* (2000), *Savage Paradise* (2000), *Heaven* (2001), *Libido of Death* (2002) *Hell* (2003) which draw on many of the same visual motifs. It was also a source of inspiration for another more recent major photographic project. The *Mosquito Project* (2010-11) visually documents the numerous empty public buildings and facilities principally built to fulfil election campaign promises and abandoned before

⁹⁶² Yao, 'Artist Statement', in *Everything Will Fall*, 2006, p.5.

⁹⁶³ Taylor, 'Discovering a Nationalist Heritage', *China Heritage Quarterly*, 2009 (online); Joseph R. Allen, *Taipei: City of Displacements*, University of Washington Press, 2011.

⁹⁶⁴ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁹⁶⁵ These works featured in a solo exhibition entitled *Everything Will Fall to Ruin: Yao Jui-chung* shown at the TFAM in 2006; and a selection of works from this series also featured in *Ruins and Civilization* (curated by Amy Huei-hua Cheng at Eslite Gallery, Taipei, 2004); the *Asia Pacific Triennial* at the Queensland Art Gallery in 2009. These works have also been reproduced in art books including *Roam the Ruins of Taiwan*, Garden City, 2004; *The Ruined Islands*, Garden City Publishing, Taipei, 2007.

completion. Operating under the pseudonym, 'LSD – Lost Society Documentation' Yao, with the assistance of his students, photographed over a hundred public buildings across the island, including art and cultural centres, resorts and undercover car parks. These sites have been described colloquially as 'mosquito houses' because insects are the only living forms dwelling within. Featuring in the 2010 Taipei Biennial, these photographs have attracted significant public attention and raised concerns regarding the misuse of public taxes.⁹⁶⁶ The government has purportedly declared it would investigate the issue.⁹⁶⁷ Although Yao is not a political or social activist, this series on Taiwan's history in particular have certainly raised public consciousness.

These photographs expose what the artist describes as the 'black hole' of Taiwan's history in which dilapidated and crumbling buildings can be viewed as memorials or monuments.⁹⁶⁸ Pierre Nora perceptively argues that there are two types of monuments: 'places of refuge, sanctuaries of spontaneous devotion and silent pilgrimage, where one finds the living heart of memory'; and monuments that are 'imposed from above by a national authority or by an established interest' and have a 'spectacular and triumphant' quality.⁹⁶⁹ For Yao, these sites of ruin are analogous to a refuge or sanctuary, opening up contemplative space through which to explore the nature and meaning of history, identity and place. These ruins are, in effect, shrines or tombstones commemorating the forgotten, overlooked or marginalised aspects of Taiwan's history. By contrast, in other works, including *Territory Takeover*, *Recover Mainland China* and *Long March – Shifting the Universe*, created while the *Ruins*

⁹⁶⁶ Yao also produced a book which comprises more than 700 pages, is entitled *Mirage: Disused Public Property in Taiwan*, and it encompasses a full visual record and accompanying text about these buildings.

⁹⁶⁷ In an interview with Ron Hanson, Yao explains that the government has imposed a moratorium on the development of further buildings until they investigate the matter. See Hanson, 'Everything will Fall Into Ruins', *Afterall Online*.

⁹⁶⁸ Chang Ching-wen, 'Trash, Violence and Cynicism: Yao Jui-chung's Painting from 1988 to 2007', in *Yao Jui-chung*, 2008 p.327.

⁹⁶⁹ Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire', *Representations* (special issue: *Memory and Counter-memory*), no. 29, Spring 1989, p.23.

series was in progress, Yao turns his attention to monuments deemed to have national significance and more widely recognised, celebrated and commemorated as public sites and markers of national identity.

Territory Takeover

In March 1994, Yao Jui-chung placed a full page advertisement in the leading Taiwan art magazine, *Artist (Yishujia)*, where he declared he was going to 'Attack and Occupy Taiwan'. Drawing from the Chinese Nationalist political tenet, 'Expel the Barbarians and Recover Lost Land' (驅逐韃虜恢復中華), Yao then embarked on his journey, travelling to the six different locations where successive colonial and military powers landed on the island, from the Dutch to the Chinese Nationalists.⁹⁷⁰ Upon reaching each point of arrival, Yao stripped naked and, like a dog marking its territory, urinated on each site.

In this series Yao literally inserts himself into Taiwan's grand narrative, engaging in issues relating to its national identity and its history of foreign colonisation. The artist re-claims the site by urinating on it, an illegal act which he likens to the processes of 'unlawful colonisation'.⁹⁷¹ The six images of him performing this act memorialise each historical moment. These photographs highlight the legacies of Taiwan's history of military conquest and political struggle and, according to the artist, they responded to 'how people think at this time about Taiwan's sad and terrible national history but in an absurd and witty way'.⁹⁷² Yao remarks that the idea of urinating on a monument was inspired during a mountain climbing trip to Mt. Jade (*Yushan*). When the artist reached its summit he discovered a bronze statue of the Chinese scholar and politician Yu Youren (于右任) who came to Taiwan with the KMT. Yao says he

⁹⁷⁰ These six sites are: Fort Zeelandia in present day Tainan where the Dutch East India Company landed; Sheliiao Island where the Spanish landed; Luerhmen where Ming loyalist, Zheng Chengong (Koxinga) landed; Fort Provintia where the Qing dynasty forces landed; Aoti where the Japanese landed; Keelung where the Nationalist Army landed.

⁹⁷¹ Yao Jui-chung cited in Murray, in *Unsightly Aesthetics*, (forthcoming), p.5.

⁹⁷² Yao Jui-chung. Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

was confused by this large bronze statue of this prominent Chinese figure and why it was erected on the peak of Taiwan's highest mountain and, since he needed to relieve himself, he urinated on it.⁹⁷³

The series *Territory Takeover* (1994) (figs. 6.5, 6.6 & 6.7) directly engages in Taiwan's identity discourse and particularly with issues concerning the re-writing of Taiwan's history and the assertion of Taiwan's sovereignty which, as discussed, were both the subject of significant debate amongst politicians, intellectuals and in the media during the 1990s. As a reflection of the rise of Taiwanese nationalism, new definitions of the term 'Taiwanese' also became the subject of heated discussion as people were labelled ethnically and politically 'Taiwanese' (*benshengren*) or 'Chinese' (*waishengren*) depending on when they arrived on the island.⁹⁷⁴ As a younger artist of Taiwanese and Chinese heritage, with a mix of curiosity and scepticism, Yao viewed this binary as a political construct. In the context of his work *Territory Takeover*, he reflects on this issue:

...at the time there was a lot of discussion about Taiwan's national identity, and politicians were actually accusing each other of not being "Taiwanese". Taiwanese identity is very confused but inside this confusion we can talk. I wanted to ask who are the *real* Taiwanese? I find there are none. I wanted to remind people that Taiwan is a colonised country and that we need to open our minds up more to constructing a new identity.⁹⁷⁵

For this series the artist's extensive research into Taiwan's history is evident in the text labels he wrote for each work explaining in detail what occurred at each of the six sites. For example, the first work of this series (fig. 6.5) was accompanied by the following text:

Landing Point: Fort Zeelandia: On 26 August 1624, the Dutch withdrew from the Penghu Islands under the terms of a peace settlement with the Ming court. They sailed east across the Taiwan Strait to the south-west coast of Taiwan to enter the Tai River at Luerhmen. They landed at Taoyuan (now

⁹⁷³ This statue was erected on this site in 1966 and in 1996 it was destroyed and by pro-independence advocates. Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

⁹⁷⁴ See Introduction p.13.

⁹⁷⁵ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

Anping Harbor) and occupied Anping and the Tainan area. While visiting this site, Yao Jui-Chung pissed here marking his territory.

Most importantly, in these works the artist does not seek to visually chronicle or re-write Taiwan's history, as Yang Mao-lin did in *Made in Taiwan*. Instead, Yao draws on official nationalist histories to question their authority and validity. While he recognises the value of historical scholarship, as both artist and writer, Yao also believes in the importance of questioning and critiquing the agendas and writing of history. He states that the 'recording of "truth" does not equate [with] "truth"'; and, given the subjective nature of historical interpretation, an 'authentically objective history' is not possible.⁹⁷⁶ In his critical analysis of the politicisation and re-writing of Taiwan's history, the sociologist, Hsiao A-chin (蕭阿勤), verifies this claim as he discusses how both the KMT and DPP governments have re-interpreted Taiwan's history to suit their own political agendas. He notes that '...different components of history are highlighted, and different meanings are attached to the same figure or event. Political actors and their current concerns motivate the recollection of the past.'⁹⁷⁷

In the *Territory Takeover* series of photographs, Yao contests and subverts the notion of historical truth. The artist purposefully sets out to ridicule the ways the land is territorialised and commemorated, highlighting what he describes as 'history's false authenticity'.⁹⁷⁸ He writes, 'all supposed history is nothing but a story told and interpreted by succeeding generations [...] our memories are an artificial construct and have been manipulated'.⁹⁷⁹ Seeking to undermine the concepts of historical truth and authenticity, upon the surface of each of these six black and white photographs, the artist applied a brown sepia-toned glaze so that they appear deceptively historical; each of the

⁹⁷⁶ Yao Jui-chung cited in Cheng, 'Finding Power', in *Yao Jui-chung*, 2008, p.179

⁹⁷⁷ Hsiao, *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism*, 2000, p.173

⁹⁷⁸ Yao Jui-chung cited in Cheng, 'Finding Power', in *Yao Jui-chung*, 2008, p.179.

⁹⁷⁹ Yao Jui-chung cited in Cheng, 'Finding Power', in *Yao Jui-chung*, 2008, p.175

photographs has been set in a European-style gold frame which accentuates the *faux* historicism.⁹⁸⁰

When exhibited, these six gold-framed photographs were hung above six infant-size gold painted toilet bowls attached to the walls. These toilet bowls explicitly express Yao's views of Taiwan's history, which he derisively describes as 'shitory'.⁹⁸¹ In Taiwan, the colour gold symbolises wealth and happiness, or human desire and is customarily applied to objects of worship, such as religious statues and shrines. However, Yao declares, 'for me gold is shit – it has an opposite meaning – history and even art can be like shit as it becomes power and money and reveals Taiwan's imitated culture and fakeness'.⁹⁸²

Territory Takeover has been shown in various configurations nationally and internationally. In 1994, when the work was exhibited at Taipei's IT Park, the artist installed, in the middle of the room, an upside-down wooden dinghy that was elevated from the floor (fig. 6.8). Beneath it was an empty steel dog's cage from which emanated the soft beam of blue neon light. According to the artist, the boat signified the island of Taiwan; and the dog's cage was a visual metaphor for territorialisation and authoritarian rule and the ways history has been 'closed in space'.⁹⁸³ Local art critics Chiang Ju-hai (江如海) and Huang Hai-ming (黃海鳴) discuss the symbolism of these objects, and particularly the 'absent' dog. In reference to Yao's allusion to authoritarianism, Huang claims the dog's cage signifies the suppression of left-wing intellectuals (including artists) during the White Terror period who, he remarks, subsequently joined

⁹⁸⁰ These frames have the form and texture of bamboo, but Yao informed me it is intended to replicate the bintou tree which has a similar appearance to bamboo and grows on the coastline of Taiwan where several of Taiwan's colonisers landed. Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

⁹⁸¹ In Chinese (Mandarin), 'shit' and 'history' are homophones.

⁹⁸² Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁹⁸³ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

the opposition DPP and have become 'the new Masters of Taiwan'.⁹⁸⁴ However, the art critics ask if these 'native dogs' have really 'recovered their lost territory' or if, in fact, they are now merely following another Master, led by the West?⁹⁸⁵

Notwithstanding the confronting and subversive aspects of this work, *Territory Takeover* was selected, amongst other works, to represent Taiwan at the 1997 Venice Biennale. As noted in Chapters One and Two, the Venice Biennale is widely recognised as a valued opportunity for the Taiwan government to promote Taiwan to the world, and the selection of this work is testimony to the image Taiwan sought to project: as democratic, tolerant and culturally distinctive.⁹⁸⁶ In a general review of the 1997 Venice Biennale, Yao (under his pseudonym Yao-I) wrote that Taiwan has become an exemplar of creative freedom and autonomy amongst other participating Asian countries.⁹⁸⁷ In this exhibition, Yao controversially replaced the overturned boat from the previous installation with a gold-painted toy military aircraft to signify America's military presence in Taiwan during the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1996 which occurred a year prior to this exhibition (fig. 6.9).⁹⁸⁸ In reference to this event, the artist said, 'the Taiwan government paid a lot of money to the US military to protect us from the Chinese who fired missiles across the Taiwan Strait'.⁹⁸⁹ Although exhibition reviews of *Territory Takeover* were mainly descriptive, according to the artist, the public responded positively to the 'educational' aspects of the work. Tongue in cheek he observes that 'most of them said my penis was very small [...] but they [the public] still thought it

⁹⁸⁴ Chiang Ju-hai, 批判或反批判—評姚瑞中的土地測量系列（本土佔領行動）（'Criticism or Anti-criticism - Analysing Yao Jui-chung's "Territory Manoeuvre Series-Territory Take-over"'），雄獅美術（*Lion Art*），no.278, April, 1994, pp.76-83 (in Chinese); Huang Hai-ming, 'Contemporary Art of Taiwan: Virtual Connections, Criticism, Returnings', in *Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Faces*, 1997, p.21.

⁹⁸⁵ Huang, 'Contemporary Art of Taiwan: Virtual Connections', *Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Faces*, 1997, p.21.

⁹⁸⁶ See Chapter One pp. 90-91; Chapter Two pp.137-138.

⁹⁸⁷ Yao-I, 'Retreat from Poverty', *Modern Art*, 1997, pp.2-18 (in Chinese).

⁹⁸⁸ See Chapter One p.58.

⁹⁸⁹ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 10 Sept. 1998, Taipei.

was a good introduction to Taiwan's history as most people know very little about it'.⁹⁹⁰

Yao's participation in the Venice Biennale marked an important turning point in his career.⁹⁹¹ At the age of twenty-eight, it was the first time the artist had viewed and contributed to a major international exhibition; subsequently he received numerous invitations to participate in artist-residencies and exhibitions in Taiwan and other countries including Japan, France, England, Canada and China.⁹⁹² His work also featured in the exhibitions *Face to Face* (1999) and *Islanded: Contemporary Art from New Zealand, Singapore and Taiwan* (2006) both of which I curated and were referred to in the Introduction.⁹⁹³ In 2009 Yao was selected as one of three artists to represent Taiwan in the Queensland Art Gallery's *Asia Pacific Triennial*.⁹⁹⁴

During his travels overseas, Yao says he became increasingly aware of the need to establish his own 'local style' rather than following international trends.⁹⁹⁵ While the artist embraces internationalism, Yao believes identity consciousness to be important and, as his aforementioned manifesto indicates, he believes artists should develop a 'new aesthetic' responsive to the times and local environment. In an interview, Yao elaborated on this concept, which he

⁹⁹⁰ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁹⁹¹ Yao elaborates on the opportunities and expectations this exhibition creates for artists in Lee Wei-jing, 'Creating is to reflect the Mood', *Artist*, 1999, pp. 449-457 (in Chinese).

⁹⁹² A selection of group exhibitions Yao has participated in include: *Contemporary Taiwanese Art Exhibition - The New Identity* curated by Fumio Nanjo (1998, Taipei and Fukuoka); *You Talk/I Listen* (1998, TFAM and Paris); *Close up - Contemporary Art from Taiwan* (2000, Vancouver, Canada); *The Gravity of The Immaterial* (2002, MOCA, Taipei, and touring); *International Triennale of Contemporary Art* (2005, Yokohama); *Two Asias Two Europes: An International Exhibition of Contemporary Art* (2005, Shanghai) *Contemporary Taiwanese Art in the Era of the Contention* curated by Pan An-yi (2006, United States). Yao has also been an artist-in-residence in San Francisco (1997), London (2001) and New York (2006) and Scotland (2007).

⁹⁹³ *Islanded: Contemporary Art from New Zealand, Singapore and Taiwan* (2006) was co-curated by myself along with Lee Weng Choy and Eugene Tan and it was shown in Wellington, New Zealand and in Singapore. This exhibition included selected works from Yao's *Long March* series.

⁹⁹⁴ These included: Yao, Chen Chieh-jen and the US-based artist Charwei Tsai.

⁹⁹⁵ Yao, Email to the Author, 9 Sept. 2009.

described in local terms and in relation to: the garish stage colours of local Taiwanese opera; the 'electric flower cars' (電子花車), meaning the embellished and brightly-lit floats used in funerals; temple festivals (廟會); local karaoke; and the 'spicy' 'Betel nut beauties' (檳榔西施), referring to young women who are typically scantily dressed and sit in bright, neon-lit, glass kiosks on major roads and thoroughfares selling betel nuts and cigarettes.⁹⁹⁶ These local customs and practices distinguish Taiwan's 'funky local style' (俗, or *su*, which literally means 'common' or 'vulgar') from Chinese and Western aesthetic styles, which Yao claims are 'very different'.⁹⁹⁷ He identifies artists, including Wu Mali and Wu Tien-Chang, whose works he believed embodied this identity consciousness and who inspired him to think about 'what is real Taiwan style'.⁹⁹⁸

While Yao promoted identity consciousness and the idea of a 'Taiwanese aesthetic', he vehemently rejected parochial and prescriptive notions of *bentu*, and was highly critical of the commercial and political imperatives and agendas driving the *bentu* debate in art. Given the increasing popularity of *bentu* in the art market during an interview in 1995, Yao acknowledged there was pressure on artists to respond to local issues. He is nevertheless dismissive of artists who claim their works are *bentu*:

If you're *bentu* you might be more popular but maybe your art isn't very local. Like now, people say 'I love Taiwan' but maybe he doesn't and likes China more. I don't like artists who say I'm *bentu* [...] What is *bentu*? [...] when I go hiking and meet local aborigines, actually they are *bentu* [...] My theory is if you don't have too much confidence so he must use *bentu* to market his work.⁹⁹⁹

The artist insisted that proponents of *bentu* in art needed to develop a new way of thinking about identity that transcended the oppositional logic used to define and distinguish people and art as 'Taiwanese' or 'other'. He remarks,

⁹⁹⁶ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

⁹⁹⁷ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei. This perception of local culture was prevalent in Taiwan during the 1990s and was an expression of Taiwan consciousness.

⁹⁹⁸ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

⁹⁹⁹ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 1995, Taipei.

'they talk about it in the old way [but] they don't have a new concept'.¹⁰⁰⁰ He adds, 'they forget the world is very big and there is a need to understand each other. Taiwan's identity is multi-ethnic and our future is international [...] artists should not be limited by *bentuhua*'.¹⁰⁰¹ Although Yao does not define exactly who 'they' are, he is referring generally to politicians and Taiwanese nationalists who promoted a Taiwan-centred rather than international viewpoint. Yao asserted that his generation must break away from the ideological paradoxes and the combative forms of nationalism that characterised this *bentu* debate and establish a new identity that is both individualistic and local.¹⁰⁰²

Recover Mainland China

Following his 'occupation offensive' of Taiwan in *Territory Takeover*, Yao embarked on an historical offensive of China. *Recover Mainland China* comprises six distinct bodies of work created in a range of media, including installation, collage, drawings, performance and photographs. These six bodies of work are titled: (1. Preface; (2. Preface-Shitory; (3. Do Military-Revolutionary Document; (4. Do Military-Book of Chrysanthemum; (5. Prophecy; and (6. Action and must be read sequentially as a series of steps or manoeuvres in his counter-attack of China. While detailed analyses of each of these six manoeuvres are beyond the scope of this research, the current discussion is confined to the main concepts and motifs, and focuses principally on his final 'Action' series, in which the artist physically launches his counter-attack in China.

This series, created between 1994 and 1996, derives its name from the KMT's former well-worn slogan 'Recover Mainland China' (反攻大陸) which the artist rehabilitates and imbues with new meaning as he explores the political

¹⁰⁰⁰ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 1997, Taipei.

¹⁰⁰¹ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 1997, Taipei.

¹⁰⁰² Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 1997, Taipei.

realities, histories and myths surrounding Taiwan's relationship with China. From 1949, when the KMT retreated to Taiwan, this slogan was the KMT's supreme guiding principle until 1979 when the Republic of China was de-recognised by the United Nations and the slogan was eventually consigned to the 'historical garbage tip'.¹⁰⁰³ It was used by the KMT to indoctrinate the Taiwanese masses and promote its one China policy. Widely propagated in society, including schools, the artist remembers hearing this slogan as a child: 'We only learnt Chinese history and geography [and] there was just Beijing Opera on TV [...], and if you speak Taiwanese in school you had to give the teacher one dollar. So at that time the only way is Chinese'.¹⁰⁰⁴

After martial law was terminated in 1987, travel restrictions to China were lifted and, after finishing his military service, Yao visited China for the first time in 1996. As discussed, the present-day realities did not correspond with his father's nostalgic memories of China, and nor did he discover any trace of the ancient China which he had learnt about at school. Reflecting on his initial impressions of China, during my interview with him, Yao notes:

When I go to China I find there is no connection – [it] is just based on memory. [In the 1990s] our economy was very strong and it was before China really opened up [...] When we go to China they think we are a rich man and they will rob you. Even if we speak the same language and have a similar lifestyle you know we are not really Chinese people.¹⁰⁰⁵

In this series the artist gives visual expression to the profound sense of disenchantment and dislocation he experienced in China. Throughout, there is one recurring visual motif: a floating or hovering figure whose feet symbolically never touch the ground. In *Preface* and *Preface-Shitory*, the first works from this series, the figure appears, in silhouette and in three-

¹⁰⁰³ JJ Shih, 'Recovering Mainland China: Deconstructing Two Warring Blocs Through One Soldier's Performance', in *Yao Jui-chung: Recover Mainland China- Prophecy & Action*, Lai Hsiang-ling (ed.), Dimension Endowment of Art, Taipei, 1997, p.8.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there were Taiwanese TV programs (including Taiwanese soap operas) broadcast before and after prime time hours.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 10 Sept. 1998, Taipei.

dimensional form with a helicopter-like propeller around its neck. In a darkened room it hovered above a floor covered in white powder in a space bathed in a deep blue light which accentuates the sense of ethereality and dislocation.¹⁰⁰⁶ In a subsequent series of drawings which Yao completed when he was in military service, including *Do Military- Revolutionary Document* and *Do Military Service – Book of Chrysanthemum*, the same hovering figure with a helicopter's blade spinning around its neck is finely drawn in biro. In the former work this figure was symbolically inscribed on the cover page of the monthly air force magazine, distributed amongst young servicemen as a form of 'spiritual education'.¹⁰⁰⁷

Notably, in these earlier works, the figure is unidentifiable, appearing only in silhouetted form. However, in his *Action* series, the artist becomes the physical embodiment of the figure as he photographs himself, in flight, hovering above the ground. In the background are some of China's most historically significant monuments, including the Great Wall, the Forbidden City in Tiananmen (fig. 6.10), and the Temple of Heaven in Beijing; as well as the famous Shanghai Bund. In these photographs, the artist wears a soldier's cap and his posture mimics that of a soldier, rigidly straight, with his arms firmly by his side. Although his father did not return to China, Yao says he wanted to convey the sense of disorientation and disconnection many other retired KMT soldiers experienced when they visited China after the lifting of martial law.¹⁰⁰⁸

This work bears some resemblance to the internationally renowned German artist, Anselm Kiefer's early political interventions in which he dressed in paramilitary uniform and had himself photographed against several European

¹⁰⁰⁶ *Recover Mainland China - Preface & Do Military Service* was exhibited at IT Park Gallery in 1996.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Hsu, 'When History is Beside Itself' in *Introduction to Taiwan's Contemporary Art*, 1998, p.2.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Yao quoted in Murray, in *Unsightly Aesthetics*, (forthcoming), p.6.

monuments doing the 'Seig Heil' Nazi salute.¹⁰⁰⁹ However, when asked whether he had been influenced by Kiefer's series of political actions, similarly described as 'occupations', Yao replied that, while 'fond of' Kiefer's work it did not inspire him as much as did other artists' works, such as Yves Klein and Marcel Duchamp.¹⁰¹⁰ It is also noteworthy that around the same time Yao created this series, performance art in China was also becoming increasingly popular. Although Yao has not specifically referred to this phenomenon, he would certainly have been aware of Chinese artists Cang Xin (苍鑫), Song Dong (宋东), and Zhang Huan (张洵) who also worked in photography and installation, and used their bodies to create performative works, and explored similar themes relating to history, memory, and place.

While acknowledging these developments and the autobiographical dimensions of this series, *Action* responds most directly to political issues concerning Taiwan's long-standing and complex relationship with China. These black and white sepia-stained photographs lampoon the KMT regime and its quest to re-take China, and they ridicule and expose the fraught relationship between Taiwan and China. Yao remarked:

The antagonistic confrontation between the two sides of the Strait has influenced us imperceptibly and become part of our memories and consciousness [...] For me the whole saga is just as ridiculous as I [was] claiming to have recovered the Mainland China with a silly act just like that. It's a complete joke.¹⁰¹¹

It is no coincidence that the artist completed this *Action* series in 1996, a year prior to the handover of Hong Kong; indeed one of the images in this series symbolically depicts the artist hovering in the air in Tiananmen Square against the façade of the National Museum of China to which was attached a large digital clock (fig. 6.11). From 1986 this clock counted down the days, hours and minutes to the handover in July 1997, after which time the clock was

¹⁰⁰⁹ Anselm Kiefer's series, which was called *Besetzungen* (*Occupations*), was carried out by him in 1969.

¹⁰¹⁰ Yao, Email to the Author, 9 Nov. 2009.

¹⁰¹¹ Yao Jui-chung quoted in Cheng, 'On the Road', in *Yao Jui-Chung*, 2008, p.19.

removed. Furthermore, in the wake of the 1989 Tiananmen massacre, and the aforementioned 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis, Taiwan-China relations became increasingly tense and hostile, and attracted significant media attention. When questioned about his political views of China in an interview in 1998, Yao remarks,

China always says they want to fight Taiwan so they are the enemy. Sometime they say we are family and other times they say we will kill you. If your mother says if you don't come back I'll kill you [...] then of course you don't come back.¹⁰¹²

In *Prophecy*, which is the fifth stage in *Recover Mainland China*, these political tensions between Taiwan and China are metaphorically explored through the prism of power, sex and mythology. In this audio-visual installation, Yao satirises the Taiwan-China relationship by eroticising it, creating a series of discrete and softly-lit rooms around which are placed figurative drawings of erect phalluses symbolising desire and power.¹⁰¹³ One of these rooms was an empty bridal chamber that was intended to resemble an Emperor's bedroom customarily shared with his concubines. From this particular room, the soft, alluring voice of woman was heard repeatedly singing the words, 'waiting for you to come back' (等著你回來), sourced by the artist from a famous Shanghai song of the 1930s.¹⁰¹⁴ Interpreting this work, the local art critic, JJ Shih (石瑞仁) poignantly remarks, "The absent "she" and the bed in the room signify China, a site so envied and longed for by [...] "they" [Taiwan]'.¹⁰¹⁵

Taiwan's political impotence and *de facto* national status are emphasised in this work and are explored in relation to the KMT's unrealised ambition to reclaim China, and the DPP's aspirations for national sovereignty. In a series of text-panels, the artist delivers a twelve-point prophecy based on an ancient

¹⁰¹² Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 10/9/1998, Taipei.

¹⁰¹³ *Recover Mainland China – Prophecy and Action* was shown at Dimensions Endowment of Art, Taipei, 1997.

¹⁰¹⁴ Shih, 'Recovering Mainland China', in Yao Jui-chung: *Recover Mainland China*, 1997, p.9.

¹⁰¹⁵ Shih, 'Recovering Mainland China', in Yao Jui-chung: *Recover Mainland China*, 1997, p.9.

Chinese text.¹⁰¹⁶ Yao's prophesy spans the past, present and future: addressing the KMT's withdrawal from China; and visualising a future when Taiwan 'divorces' China, triggering a cross-strait war. Finally, in this prophesy the artist imagines a world that 'is for all' where peace reigns and national boundaries no longer exist. This idea of a borderless community is further explored in *World is for All - China Beyond China*, created a year after Yao completed *Recover Mainland China*.

Recover Mainland China is an important body of work, especially in relation to Taiwan's identity discourse, and it was a precursor to *The Cynic* (2004-2005), *The Cynic Republic* (2006) and *Long March - Shifted the Universe* (2002). Before turning to the latter work, the two *Cynic* series deserve mention as they are amongst the few works Yao produced that directly engage in contemporary party-politics explored in relation to Taiwan's cross-strait and international relations. These two series, which comprise drawings on gold-leaf paper, are imbued with political symbolism. They typically comprise two naked human figures that have the head of a dog or impish-like horns, signifying the cynic and the devil. These figures are depicted in either red, blue or green colours, signifying 'Red Communist China'; the (blue) KMT Party; and the (green) DPP pro-independence party;¹⁰¹⁷ and they are often shown copulating. For example, in *Taiwanese*, a red-horned man (signifying China), is shown having sex with a green woman with a dog's head (signifying the DPP). From her mouth is a speech bubble bearing the word 'Taiwanese' in English that Yao has phonetically translated into Chinese as 'ta wan ni si,' meaning 's/he play you die,' which evidently refers to China's threatening gestures to thwart the DPP's campaign for independence.¹⁰¹⁸ In 2011, this particular

¹⁰¹⁶ This Prophesy is based on the Chinese *Push-Back Prophecy* (推背图, *Tui Bei Tu*), written in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) that related the rise and decline of the Tang dynasty. Yao Jui-chung, interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

¹⁰¹⁷ In *The Cynic Republic* that focuses on Taiwan's international relations, the colours signified the countries represented (eg. blue signifies America and green Italy).

¹⁰¹⁸ Another work bearing the English word 'Chinese' is phonetically translated into Chinese as 'Chuai Ni Si,' meaning 'kicking you [to] death'.

painting attracted media attention after a city councillor reportedly described it as 'derogatory' and 'self-defamatory' (referring to the red dog, being Taiwan, seeming to be raped) and it was re-located to a less conspicuous space at MOCA in Taipei.¹⁰¹⁹

Long March – Shifted the Universe

In 2002, Yao launched his final historical 'counter-attack' on China in *Long March – Shifted the Universe* (2002-2004). In this photographic series, Yao returns to China to visit particular sites along the route of the Long March in southern and western China and has his photograph taken – upside down. In this series of ten black and white photographs Yao sets out literally to turn history on its head and highlight the 'absurdity' of history and human destiny:

If we say that resignation is the destiny of a generation lost in the fog of history, then the least we can do is make commentary on our plight. It's just like I once said, the historical destiny of humanity has a certain incurable absurdity!¹⁰²⁰

This series of photographs taken when Yao was invited to join the Long March Project, a large, participatory-based art project, involved more than 150 local and international artists, two Chinese curators, and members from local communities.¹⁰²¹ The Long March (1934-35)¹⁰²² is one of the most well-known

¹⁰¹⁹ The work was previously located outside the grounds of MOCA and it was finally agreed that rather than it being fully withdrawn from the exhibition the work could be moved to the inner area of the museum's courtyard. See Liu Jung and Chao Ching-yu, 'Painting Receives Mixed Reaction from Onlookers', *Taipei Times*, 30 July 2011. <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2011/07/30/2003509502> (accessed 24/8/2012).

¹⁰²⁰ Yao Jui-chung 'Artist Preface', in Yao Jui-Chung, 2008, p.11.

¹⁰²¹ The Long March project was initiated in 1999 by artist, writer and curator Lu Jie and was an ambitious and long-term curatorial and artistic project. 'A Walking Visual Display', in which Yao participated, was one part of this project and was co-curated by Lu Jie and Qiu Zhijie. For more information see <http://www.longmarchproject.com/english/e-progress0.htm> (accessed 17/6/2012). Also see Marion Pastor Rocas, 'The Dimensions of "The Long March"', *Ctrl+Pdf Journal of Contemporary Art*, no. 11 March 2008, pp. 50-53. http://www.ctrlp-artjournal.org/pdfs/CtrlP_Issue11.pdf (accessed 16/10/2010).

¹⁰²² Details regarding the distance of the Long March and the dates when it finished vary depending on whether historians base their research on official Chinese interpretations of the event and whether the main event or successive marches are taken into consideration. For different accounts on the Long March see: Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, Grove Press/Atlantic, New York, 1968 (1938); Sun Shuyun, *The Long March*, Harper Press, London,

and mythologised events, or series of events, in China's history, involving Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communists (CCP) and Chiang Kai-shek and the Chinese Nationalists (KMT). Given the extensive documentation of this event, it suffices to note that it secured the victory of Mao and the CCP who had showed considerable courage and resilience, and the defeat of Chiang Kai-shek and his KMT troops who subsequently fled to Taiwan. The Long March changed the future of China and in Yao's view it 'created' the destiny of Taiwan. It triggered the widespread migration of Chinese who escaped not only to Taiwan and Hong Kong but also to the United States and Europe, becoming part of the vast Chinese diaspora which Yao explores in his series *World is for All*. Yao says, 'If we reversed this situation [and the KMT wasn't defeated] maybe there wouldn't be a Taiwan – maybe it'd be one China [...] and maybe [Chinese] people wouldn't be living overseas'.¹⁰²³

Yao photographed himself against ten historically significant landmarks along the route of the Long March, including the Luding Bridge in Sichuan province (fig. 6.12), as well as in front of the building where the Zunyi conference was held in Guizhou province (fig. 6.13). However, in this photographic series he is depicted doing a handstand. When presenting this series, the artist cleverly turns these images 180 degrees so that both the landscape and the artist appear upside down. As such, the subjects in these images defy gravity and the viewer experiences an overwhelming sense of disorientation. Similar to *Territory Takeover*, each work in this series is accompanied by an extended text label that provides details about the particular sites represented in the image. Each text panel concludes with the line 'Yao Jui-Chung was here to accomplish the feat of "shifting the universe"'.

2006; John K Fairbank and Denis Twitchett (eds.), *Cambridge History of China – Republican China 1912-1949*, Part I, vol 12, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983.

¹⁰²³ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

This series undermines not only the conventions of portrait photography but also questions and challenges the ways history shapes us or, more specifically, how an historical event defines our destiny which, in turn, constructs our sense of national identity. The artist notes that, in China, the Long March is celebrated and commemorated as part of China's national history whereas, in Taiwan, few people know about the Long March because, he says 'for us it's shit and for them it's victory'.¹⁰²⁴

History is about the winners – not the losers. The Kuomintang came to Taiwan because they lost. Memories become history but those that have power can change your memory and history.¹⁰²⁵

World is for All – China Beyond China

In *World is for All - China Beyond China* (1997-2000) (figs. 6.14 & 6.15) Yao shifts his attention from geopolitical issues surrounding Taiwan's identity and its relationship with China to focus on issues relating to globalisation and transmigration explored from the perspective of the Chinese diaspora. In these photographs, defined as his third 'action' series, the artist re-visits some of the themes explored in *Territory Takeover* and *Recover Mainland China* relating to notions of the land, territorialisation, and displacement. This time, however, he self-reflexively examines these issues from a broader Chinese and international standpoint, and from the position of a tourist-outsider.

While travelling around Europe, America, Canada, Japan and Australia, the artist visits the various Chinatowns that have sprung up like 'satellite states' in these and other cities around the world.¹⁰²⁶ These Chinatowns are tangible markers of identity and transmigration and, as Tsu Yun Hui explains, they signify the exotic 'Other' and are associated with certain 'social virtues'

¹⁰²⁴ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

¹⁰²⁵ Yao Jui-Chung, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

¹⁰²⁶ Murray, in *Unsightly Aesthetics*, (forthcoming), p.8.

relating to communalism.¹⁰²⁷ Chinese from around the world have sought economic and/or political refuge in these settlements, including members of Yao's own family.¹⁰²⁸ As such these are marginal spaces demarcated for Chinese in exile, and for immigrant-minority labourers in search of opportunity and a new future. According to Yao they are also perceived by some Westerners as sites 'for Chinese [...] who just want to make lots of money'.¹⁰²⁹ Paradoxically, these places once viewed as dilapidated and dangerous ethnic Chinese enclaves are today embraced as thriving international commercial and tourist hubs, and reflect the vision of a progressive and cosmopolitan city.

In these eleven black and white sepia-stained photographs, Yao focuses on the historical and cultural significance of Chinatown as a symbol of identity and transmigration. In particular, he focuses on the gate which customarily demarcates the point of entry and exit in Chinatowns. The Chinese gate can be viewed as another type of monument or landmark which, as indicated, is a recurring motif in Yao's work. In his discussion on the construction of space and the significance of landmarks in China, the prominent art critic and curator Wu Hung notes that the Chinese gate is one of the principal features of a capital in Imperial China. Physically, they demarcate the inside from the outside, and they protect and conceal the power hidden within, themes Yao explores in this series.¹⁰³⁰ Yao says, 'Chinese like to build landmarks [...] they build traditional Chinese things because they feel homesick. Like dogs have an area'.¹⁰³¹ However, instead of urinating on these monuments and reclaiming the site as he did in *Territory Takeover*, in this series Yao stands under the gate

¹⁰²⁷ Tsu Yun Hui (Hui Tsu Yun), 'Ethnic Ghetto as "Gourmet Republic"', in *Transcultural Japan: At the Borderlands of Race, Gender and Identity*, David Blake Willis and Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu (eds.), Routledge, Oxon, 2008, pp.143-148.

¹⁰²⁸ Yao believes he has two step-brothers in the United States. Yao, Email to the Author, 25 Aug. 2012.

¹⁰²⁹ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 10 Sept. 1998, Taipei.

¹⁰³⁰ Wu Hung, 'Tiananmen Square: A Political History of Monuments', *Representations*, no. 35 (special issue: *Monumental Histories*), University of California Press, Summer 1991, pp.85-90.

¹⁰³¹ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 10 Sept. 1998, Taipei.

with his feet firmly on the ground with his arms raised straight in the air. A photograph was taken to commemorate each event.

This series derives its name from Dr. Sun Yat-sen's famous phrase, the 'World is For All' (*Tian Xia Wei Gong* 天下為公), traditionally inscribed on the top horizontal frame of each gate in Chinatown, referring to the idea of universal peace and brotherhood, and reinforces the idea that China belongs to all Chinese.¹⁰³² In this series Yao effectively undermines and parodies this concept by representing himself, dressed fully in black, appearing like a criminal with his hands in the air, as if surrendering himself to the police. The semi-circular photographic installation included a toy pistol in the centre. The viewer was invited to pick up the gun and point it at the artist represented in the photographs. A sign beside the gun bore the words: 'You have the right to remain silent and are innocent until proven guilty'. In this series the artist says he wanted to question and challenge racial stereotypes and, more specifically, what it means to be Chinese living overseas.

While Chinatowns provide a safe haven and a sense of 'home away from home' for many Chinese migrants, the artist reminds us that they are nevertheless built on foreign or alien soil. Yao says, 'They live in Chinatown just like China but it is on foreign land. They hardly go outside this town. Even though many live there a long time they are still [considered] foreign'.¹⁰³³ In each city, Yao invites passers-by to take the photograph of him under the gate; in so doing symbolically they become active participants in this 'othering' process.¹⁰³⁴

¹⁰³² As this series reveals, this particular phrase is not included on all gates in Chinatowns. For example, in Brisbane, Yokohama and Paris the words 'Chinatown' (*Zhongguo Cheng*) are written; and on other gates there no inscription; in New York the gate serves as a shrine with the words: 'In memory of the Americans of Chinese ancestry who lost their lives in defence of freedom and democracy'.

¹⁰³³ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 10 Sept. 1998, Taipei.

¹⁰³⁴ When Yao was visiting Brisbane in 1999 for the exhibition *Face to Face* he asked me to take a photograph of him under the gate in Chinatown which has since become part of this series. The photographic 'event' certainly attracted some public attention. Yao said he often

Each of these photographs is set in a European-style gold frame which, in this particular context, alludes to the insider/outsider binary and questions the notion of cultural authenticity. The gold leaf which the artist has also applied to these photographs serves to compress and create an illusory sense of space that accentuates this sense of disorientation.

Drawing on Benedict Anderson's idea of the imagined community I argue that this series defines Chinatown as a signifier of a unified and cohesive *Chinese* community. Notably, identity is defined here in the context of race or kinship, as *Chinese*, rather than in geopolitical or 'ethnic' Taiwanese-Chinese separatist terms. However, as this series testifies, Chinatown is, in fact, an invented or illusory imagined community. These photographs critically engage with issues of national identity, belonging and territorialisation. Yao re-presents himself as an imposter on ambiguous foreign soil. But whose territory exactly is this? Is it Chinese or Western? The artist leaves that for the viewer to decide.

Symbolically, in the final photograph of this series taken in Taipei, Yao invites several of his friends and colleagues, from Western countries and Taiwan, to stand together with him under the famous gate of the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial. Standing alongside one another, with their hands in the air, the image of these figures of mixed race and creed visually embodies the concept 'universal peace and brotherhood'. However, the fact each individual has arms raised in the air suggests they are being targeted as offenders or imposters. In relation to this work Yao said he wanted to inject a sense of 'hope' as he endeavoured to give expression to the complex and culturally hybrid nature of Taiwan's identity. In reference to ongoing ethno-cultural political debates regarding the meaning of being 'Taiwanese', in my interview with him in 1998 Yao commented:

asked people passing by to take the photograph of him because he wanted to achieve a 'spontaneous' effect. Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 10 Sept. 1998, Taipei.

In Taiwan there are different local people like *kejiaren*, *waishengren*, Aborigines [...] and *minnanren* [...] and they argue who are real Taiwanese. I think we should look at history again and see it is a mixed nation so nobody can say they are really Taiwanese.¹⁰³⁵

New directions

Based on this remark and his concluding work in the *World is for All* series, it would appear that Yao had reached an important turning point. While he continued to produce works that engaged in political and identity issues (including the *Cynic* series, 2004-2006; *Liberating Taiwan*, 2007; and *Phantom of History*, 2008), by 2010 he was exploring other artistic interests. During an interview with the artist in 2008, he remarked candidly:

I've finished looking at Taiwan's terrible history [...] I've done so many exhibitions and writing [...] it is hard to survive [...] I want to change things but it takes a lot of time [and] there's no payback so I think I should do something else. I am so tired.¹⁰³⁶

As Yao indicates here, and central to the argument of this thesis, artworks that engaged with national identity issues became less popular in the local and international art market by the late 1990s. Although Yao continued to explore identity issues until late 2000, economic factors were undoubtedly a contributing factor to Yao's change of direction, as it had been with other artists, particularly since he had become a father. While still practising art and producing books Yao began teaching at his alma mater, and he also became co-founder of several new contemporary art spaces.¹⁰³⁷ Moreover, a new generation was emerging in Taiwan and Yao was no longer the young, rebellious spirit seeking to break away from the past and forge a new path as part of the 'New Human Species'. In reference to the rise of this new, younger generation Yao says, 'identity issues are like a ghost now [...] Taiwan is more international and they [the younger generation] don't care whether we are a

¹⁰³⁵ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 10/9/98, Taipei.

¹⁰³⁶ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 2008, Taipei.

¹⁰³⁷ These include VT Art Salon and Taipei Contemporary Art Center.

country or not'.¹⁰³⁸ He adds 'they get so much information from technology [...] and are driven by commercial rather than political power [...] nihilism is the most popular attitude now'.¹⁰³⁹

In 2007 Yao, somewhat surprisingly, returned to painting, which he had first rejected at art school. He began exploring the works of traditional Chinese painters, including Shi Tao (石濤) (1642–1707) and Dong Qichang (董其昌) (1555–1636) whose works became key sources of inspiration (fig. 6.16). One might question if Yao's embrace of Chinese-style painting may have been prompted by the increasing popularity of Chinese art in Taiwan and overseas. While art market demands for Chinese art may well have been an inducement for Yao, who was now supporting a family, the artist maintains he had always admired works by some of China's ancient painters for their 'structure and distortion'.¹⁰⁴⁰ This is reflected in his artist statement:

In producing these works I referred to several distortionist painters (Style Transformed) from the late Ming dynasty that I hold in particularly high esteem and the structure of traditional Chinese landscapes through the ages, combined with my experience of life in that place at that time.¹⁰⁴¹

These works, which span six years, and comprise ten overlapping but distinct bodies of work, are too numerous to examine in any detail. Typically, however, these paintings portray imaginary landscapes of monumental mountains dotted with pagodas, dwellings, and diminutive solitary figures; along with fewer paintings of flora and fauna, and domestic scenes. However, in Yao's usual playful manner, these images have been altered and imbued with personal and contemporary significance, as reflected in the works' titles: e.g., *Yaoyiyao on the Internet in Scotland* (2007) (fig. 6.17), *Asshole Flower* (2007), *Yao is Playing Poker* (2008), *See you in my dream* (2010) and *Facebook Chat*

¹⁰³⁸ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 1997, Taipei.

¹⁰³⁹ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Yao Jui-chung, Interview with the Author, 2011, Taipei. It is relevant to note that, in Japan, younger artists have also been re-discovering traditional forms of Japanese art. However, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine in any depth parallel developments in art in Japan.

¹⁰⁴¹ Yao, Artist Statement, Solo Exhibition by Yao Jui-Chung *Wonderful*, IT Park, 2007.

(2010). The figures in these images are the same horned red, green and blue dog-like human creatures that appeared in his politically-inspired *Cynic* series. In this series, however, they take on new personae; the artist himself, represented as a monk or literati-scholar and depicted performing everyday tasks, such as working on a laptop, playing mah-jong, fishing, and also having sex and drinking scotch.

There is a strong autobiographical element to these works which he began in Scotland when he was an artist-in-residence at the Glenfiddich Distillery.¹⁰⁴² According to the artist, this time he spent in Scotland significantly contributed towards his change in artistic direction. He states,

Scotland offered the perfect place for ample rest and recuperation. It was this that truly made me appreciate the chance for quiet reflection away from the hustle and bustle of my real life. Indeed, only in Scotland did I come to understand the ancient saying; watch the mountains and one's goals become clear, watch water and feel serenity, only then can one be as free as a floating cloud or wild crane though living in a busy world....the fresh air also helped clear my head so I had a lot of time to just relax and listen to my own inner voice.¹⁰⁴³

During this period Yao spent much of his time indoors painting while enjoying the domestic bliss in the company of his then girlfriend and current wife. These works are unselfconsciously intimate and sentimental, and this is evident in the three series: *Dreamy* (2008-2011), *Romance* (2009), and *Honeymoon* (2010-2012). In several of these images two figures are shown embracing, or having sex amongst lofty mountain-scapes and gold-leaf waterfalls and rivers that gush forth. As an artist who has an enduring interest in the relationship between reality and illusion, and in the dark and murkier aspects of life, one cannot help but question if this is the paradise it seems.

Reflecting on the abandoned and dilapidated sites he discovered while creating his *Ruins* series, Yao made the following observation:

¹⁰⁴² Yao undertook this residency in Scotland from June-Sept 2007.

¹⁰⁴³ Yao, Artist Statement, Solo Exhibition by Yao Jui-Chung *Wonderful*, IT Park, 2007.

There can be no civilisation without ruins, just as there won't be a heaven if there is no hell [...] Compared to our so-called happy existence, the wasteland is [...] more "real" than the real world, and more "perfect" than perfection.¹⁰⁴⁴

This comment encapsulates Yao's views on identity, characterised by a growing scepticism towards political rhetoric, oppositional politics, and 'historical truth'. In this chapter I have argued that Yao is emblematic of his generation's cynicism and pursuit of individualism which was venerated over and above the collective idealism of his predecessors as his artworks testify.

Although Yao was not as politically involved in this identity debate as were many of his older peers, such as Wu Mali, this chapter has demonstrated that he nevertheless had a strong and enduring intellectual interest in these issues. This is evident in Yao's significant artistic output, although this study has focused on only a small selection of work he created over these two decades. This visual material has been analysed alongside textual data, including interviews conducted with the artist over twenty years. Together, they offer a valuable insight into this artist's perspectives on identity and identity consciousness.

Yao's works clearly offer a critical counter-point to the official, celebratory narratives and historiographies of the nation promoted by successive governments. They also depart from the more confrontational and impassioned critiques of nation identity issues produced by his artistic antecedents. His views and artistic practice reflect a wider paradigm shift in the art world in which national identity issues no longer held significant interest. How this impacted on the Taiwan's art field is analysed in Chapter Seven.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Yao, 'Artist Statement', in *Everything Will Fall to Ruins*, 2006, p.5.



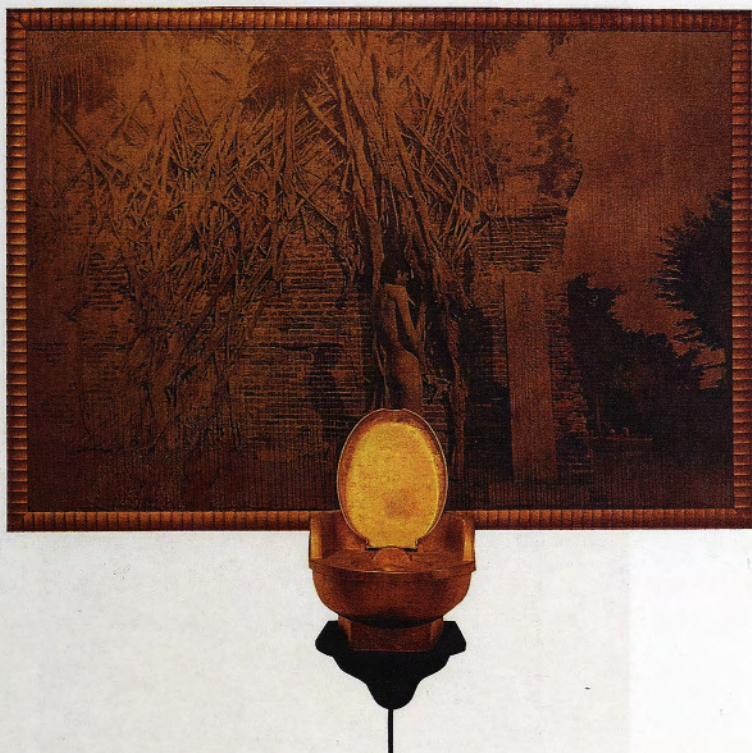
Figure 6.1: *Middle*, 1992, photograph



Figure 6.2: *Melt, Permeate, Crystal Measurement*, 1993 (work-in-progress)



Figures 6.3 & 6.4: *Roaming the Ruins - Far Off Home*, 1990-2005 (above); *Quiet on the Western Front*, 2003-2005, (below), photographs



荷蘭佔領時代 (1624-1662)

登陸地點—安平古堡

荷蘭在與明朝議和的 1624 年 (明大智四年) 八月二十六日放棄澎湖，向東航至臺灣海峽，從臺灣西南的鹿耳門進入台江抵大員 (臺南)。今安平港登陸，佔領安平、台南一帶。
姚瑩中提到此一遊，撒尿佔領此地。

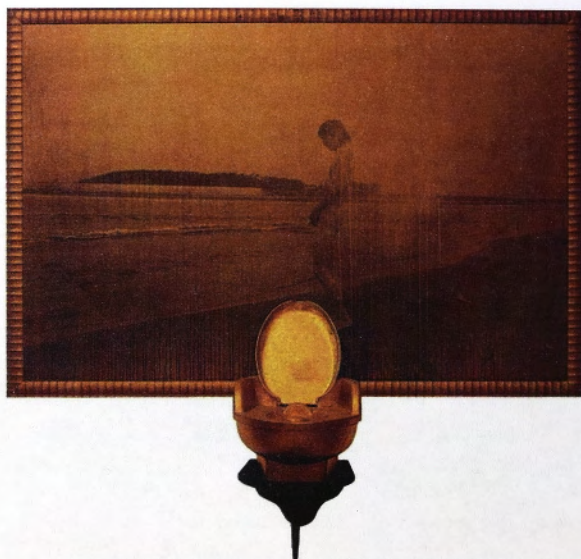
The Dutch Occupation (1624-1662)

Landing point: Fort Zeelandia

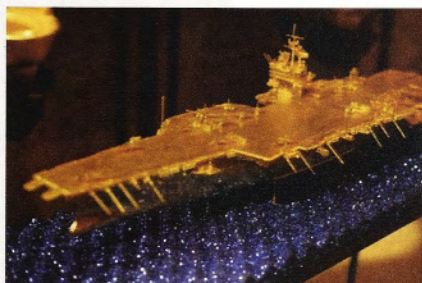
On 26 August 1624, the Dutch withdrew from the Penghu Islands under the terms of a peace settlement with the Ming court. They sailed east across the Taiwan Strait to the southwest coast of Taiwan to enter the Tai River at Luerhmen. They landed at Tayuan (now Anping Harbor) and occupied Anping and the Tainan area.

While visiting this site, Yao Jui-chung pissed here marking his territory.

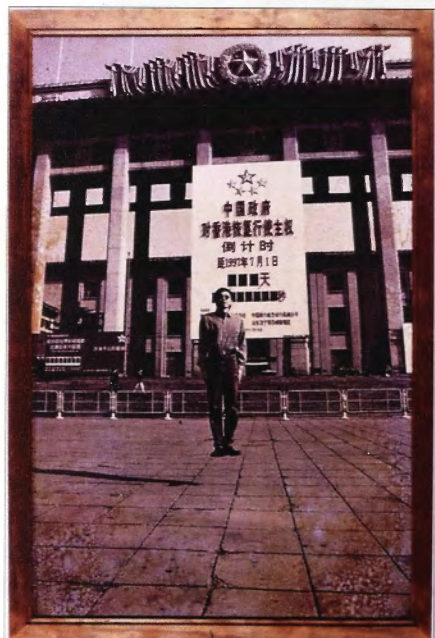
Figure 6.5: Territory Takeover - Landing Point: Fort Zeelandia - Dutch Occupation
1624-1662, 1994, performance/photo installation



Figures 6.6 & 6.7 (top to bottom): Rule of Ming Loyalist Cheng Family 1661-1683 (Landing Point: Luerhmen); Republic of China 17 October 1945-recent (Landing Point: Keelung), 1994, photographs with sepia (from *Territory Takeover* series)



Figures 6.8 & 6.9: *Territory Takeover*, mixed media installation (top to bottom):
IT Park, 1994; installation view and detail at Venice Biennale, 1997



Figures 6.10 & 6.11: *Recovering Mainland China* (Action series)-
Tiananmen Square (above); *The National Museum of China* (below),
1997, performance-photograph and gold leaf



Figures 6.12 & 6.13: *Long March -Luding Bridge at the Dadu River in Luding County* (above); *Sichuan Province; Zunyi Conference: Gui State* (below), 2002, performance and photography



Figures 6.14 & 6.15: *World is for All - Chinatown - Paris* (above) *Brisbane* (below), 1997-2000, performance-photo, gold leaf



Figures 6.16 & 6.17 (top to bottom): *Seclusion*; *Yaoyiyao on the Internet in Scotland*, 2009, painting, ink, gold leaf on hand made paper (from the *Spirited Away* and *Wonderland* series)

CHAPTER 7

Re-configuring the Local as Global in the Museological Representation of Art from Taiwan (2000-2010)

PART III

THE IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION AND CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS WITH CHINA IN THE MUSEOLOGICAL REPRESENTATION OF ART (2000-2010)

PART III

THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION AND CROSS-CULTURAL RELATIONS WITH CHINA IN THE MUSKOGEEAN REPRESENTATION OF ART (2006-2009)

CHAPTER 7

Re-configuring the Local as Global in the Museological Representation of Art from Taiwan (2000-2010)

Scholars widely acknowledge that the effects of globalisation characterised by the growth and dissemination of capital, people, digital technology, ideas and images across and between national borders have intensified, radically altering our views of the 'nation' and the world, along with our sense of place within it.¹⁰⁴⁵ This chapter explores these effects on changing perceptions of identity through the museological display of art from Taiwan during the first decade of the twenty-first century. Seeking to create a niche in the global cultural sphere, Taiwan's artists, curators and art museums became increasingly cognisant of 'the world as a single place',¹⁰⁴⁶ and also of the limitations of the 'nation', as a subject of artistic and curatorial investigation. While localism remained an important trope in visual art discourse, it is the contention of this chapter that Taiwanese separatist and Pan-Asian identity discourses that had prevailed in the 1990s were ultimately displaced by a new cultural imaginary that was recognisably transnational and transcultural.¹⁰⁴⁷ This chapter demonstrates how this vision was articulated in the Taipei and Venice biennials, which, as previously stated, are two of the most important international exhibitions on Taiwan's visual art calendar. A selection of biennials presented during this decade is used to highlight this trajectory shift from the national to the local and global.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Roland Robertson, *Globalisation: Social Theory and Global Culture*, Sage, London, 1992, p.132; Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (eds.), *Global Modernities*, Sage, London, 1995; Arjun Appadurai, 'Here and Now', in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation*, Public Worlds, vol. 1, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1996; Mike Featherstone, *Undoing Culture: Globalisation, Postmodernism and Identity*, Sage, London, 1995; Anthony D. Smith, 'Towards a Global Culture?', *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol.7, Sage, London, 1990, pp.171-191; Kevin Robins, 'Tradition and Translation: National Culture in its Global Context', in *Representing the Nation: A Reader: Histories, Heritage and Museums*, David Boswell and Jessica Evans (eds.), Routledge, London, 1999, pp.18-24, 27-29.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Robertson, *Globalisation*, 1992, p.8.

¹⁰⁴⁷ In contrast to internationalism that draws attention to relations between nation-states as the prefix 'trans' implies (see Chapter Two), 'transnationalism' and 'transculturalism' are defined as 'deterritorialised' spaces that can transcend the nation. As a phenomenon of globalisation, these two terms are understood here in relation to increased global mobility and migration, enhanced digital communication technologies, and cross-cultural engagement.

This chapter will first explore the impact of globalisation on Taiwan's political and cultural landscape, focusing on the TFAM's role in promoting Taiwan's national interests that centred on bolstering its local culture, while ensuring the island remained internationally visible and competitive. It examines how the introduction of a new local-global curatorial structure for the Taipei Biennial significantly expanded the parameters of museological representation, giving rise to new and disparate perspectives and forms of expression, which were also manifest in the Venice Biennale. An analysis of their main curatorial themes and artistic concepts reveals how the world, rather than the nation, became the prime referent in both these international exhibitions held during this decade. It is argued that these exhibitions articulated a transcultural vision, which privileged the fluidity, variability and the multidimensionality of identities and displaced fixed and essentialist definitions of *Taiwanese* identity.

Following Mike Featherstone's and Arjun Appadurai's theories on the local/global relational and spatial dimensions of cultural globalisation, this chapter explores the ways in which intersecting local and global flows have introduced new levels of cultural diversity into Taiwan's art field and contributed to this transcultural vision. With rising global mobility, advanced digital technologies, and rapidly expanding art markets, local museums, curators and artists have embraced opportunities to become more fully integrated into the global art community. Given Taiwan's deep-seated fear of marginalisation, and China's rising economic and cultural status in the world, it is argued that globalisation was not only inevitable for Taiwan but was, in fact, Taiwan's 'survival strategy'.¹⁰⁴⁸ As a small island and nation-state without official diplomatic status, globalisation and its rhetoric on de-territorialisation and borderless communities offered Taiwan alternative political and cultural

¹⁰⁴⁸ Shih Shu-mei, 'Globalisation and the (in)significance of Taiwan', *Postcolonial Studies*, 2003, p.146.

positions of identification and, somewhat paradoxically, provided a conduit through which it could re-assert and establish its position within the new global order.

The cultural politics of globalisation

The TFAM's inaugural international Taipei Biennial, *Site of Desire* (1998), set out to 'Bring Taipei to the World'.¹⁰⁴⁹ As demonstrated in Chapter Two, the ambitions of this biennial were global, but it was nevertheless regionally-focussed, showcasing contemporary artistic developments in Northeast Asia. For the second international biennial presented in 2000, the TFAM intensified its efforts to broaden its scope and to situate Taiwan art more firmly in the global mainstream. In 2000, under the management of a new Director, Huang Tsai-lang (黃才郎) (2000-2007), the TFAM implemented a series of reforms intended to generate increased opportunities for transcultural exchange as well as expanding Taiwan's global network. Strategies included the introduction of a cross-cultural collaborative curatorial model that opened up the parameters of exhibition and artistic practice in Taiwan to encompass increasingly pluralistic cultural perspectives and artistic influences, which were part of what Huang evocatively describes as the 'great global cultural stew'.¹⁰⁵⁰

Before analysing these developments in detail, it must be emphasised that these museological reforms were instigated in concert with the broader economic and political developments and cultural policy objectives of government. As discussed in Chapter Two, Taiwan's national survival, and certainly its cultural development, is largely dependent on its economic growth and on remaining internationally competitive. Globalisation, and specifically global capitalism, transcends national boundaries and, as Arif

¹⁰⁴⁹ TFAM, *Site of Desire*, Taipei, 1998, pp.2-3 (inner cover). For more information on this exhibition see Chapter Two.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Huang Tsai-lang, 'Preface', *2000 Taipei Biennial-The Sky is the Limit*, TFAM, Taipei, 2000, p.8.

Dirlik observes, 'undermines national sovereignty from within by fragmenting the national economy'.¹⁰⁵¹ With the intensification and spread of global flows of capital, the transnationalisation of labour and production, along with Taiwan's increasing commercial investments in China, issues concerning Taiwan's sovereignty were no longer at the forefront of national debate. This was exemplified in the 2008 Presidential elections when, as Bruce Jacobs points out, 'the vast majority of voters did not vote on the basis of national identity. [Rather] they voted for [...] economic growth and government efficiency'.¹⁰⁵² In part, this was a response to the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) perceived economic mismanagement and to charges of corruption against the leader, Chen Shui-bian who was Taiwan's President from 2000-2008. It was also a reaction to the politicisation and 'ethnisation'¹⁰⁵³ of national identity issues (see Chapter Two) and, as this discussion will highlight, it was also unequivocally a response to the impact of globalisation.

There exists extensive literature on globalisation, its meaning and effects. For the purposes of this discussion globalisation is defined in relation to Arun Appadurai's analysis of the five fields of view (or 'scapes') of global cultural flow. These are identified as the movement of people ('ethnoscape'), finance ('finanscape'), technological transmission ('technoscape'), along with the exchange of information/images ('mediascape') and ideas ('ideoscape'). Expanding on Anderson's theories on imagined communities, Appadurai describes these as the 'building blocks' of the 'imagined worlds' we now engage with and inhabit.¹⁰⁵⁴ It is my contention that the convergence of these

¹⁰⁵¹ Arif Dirlik, 'Global in the Local', *Global Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake (eds.), Duke University Press, Durham, 1996, p.31.

¹⁰⁵² Bruce Jacobs, 'Whither Taiwanization? The Colonization, Democratization and Taiwanization of Taiwan', p.15 (forthcoming).

¹⁰⁵³ Hsiau, 'The Indigenization of Taiwanese Literature', in *Cultural, Ethnic, and Political Nationalism*, 2005, p.144.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Appadurai, in *Modernity at Large*, 1996, pp.33-36; Featherstone, *Undoing Culture*, 1995, pp. 90, 118, 33.

flows has brought the local and global into closer contact, contributing towards the de-territorialisation of the 'nation' as a coherent and bounded entity, and towards the development of a transnational imaginary. Having said that, contrary to some theories of globalisation which suggest these global forces have contributed towards the decline of the nation-state, or that the nation-state is 'losing control', as some scholars propose,¹⁰⁵⁵ in Taiwan the nation-state in fact played a critical, strategic role in this shift from the national to the local and global. As the sociologist Wang Horng-luen (汪宏倫) reminds us, global forces are still channelled through official networks and state-run institutions (including art museums) in Taiwan, and he thus refutes theories that emphasise the diminishing power of the nation-state.¹⁰⁵⁶

For the DPP that won the seat of power in central government in 2000, globalisation was used as a conduit through which it could defend, validate and promote Taiwan's distinctive *multicultural* identity.¹⁰⁵⁷ As local scholars have observed, the idea that Taiwan's culture is both multicultural and global has been central to the DPP's campaign for Taiwan independence.¹⁰⁵⁸ Liao Ping-hui notes that, in its bid to 'reduce the risk of economic dependence on, or direct confrontation with China', the DPP made a conscious effort to 'shift Taiwan's identity from a Han-Chinese orientation to a multicultural and transnational one.'¹⁰⁵⁹ Although President Chen was eventually compelled to

¹⁰⁵⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.182; Saskia Sassen, *Losing Control: Sovereignty in an Age of Globalization?*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1996. Both Featherstone and Appadurai argue against this view. See Featherstone, *Undoing Culture*, 1995, p.118; Arjun Appadurai, in *Modernity at Large*, 1996, pp.158, 164-172.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Horng-luen Wang (Wang Horng-luén), 'Mind the Gap: on Post-National Idea(l)s and the Nationalist Reality', *Social Analysis*, vol. 46, issue 3, 2002, pp.139-147.

¹⁰⁵⁷ For a discussion on multiculturalism in the context of Taiwan's identity discourse see Chapter One p.60.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Wang Horng-luen, 'Rethinking the Global and National', *Theory Culture & Society*, 2000, pp.102-3.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Liao Ping-hui, 'Postmodern Literary Discourse', *Postmodernism in China*, 1997, p.62.

moderate his stand on Taiwan independence, he continued to promote a global cultural vision.¹⁰⁶⁰

At the municipal level, the KMT-led Taipei city government whose Taipei Cultural Affairs Bureau was responsible for overseeing the TFAM, claimed that, as a member of the 'global village', Taiwan cannot 'avoid' the effects of globalisation.¹⁰⁶¹ As the leading KMT Party spokesman, Mayor Ma Ying-jeou (1998-2006) (who subsequently became Taiwan's President in 2008), strongly promoted 'international exchange work',¹⁰⁶² and played an instrumental role in the globalisation of Taiwan art and in cultivating closer ties with China. While the KMT continued to promote the distinctiveness of Taiwan's culture it was framed in a local rather than a national or Taiwanese separatist context. It is argued that foregrounding the local over and above the national strategically circumvented issues of national sovereignty, without alienating Taiwanese nationalists and giving the DPP political leverage. Liao Hsien-hao (廖咸浩),¹⁰⁶³ the former Director of the Cultural Affairs Bureau in the Taipei City Government (2003-2006) who was responsible for drafting Taipei's cultural policy, remarks that KMT's cultural policy was closely scrutinised by the DPP.¹⁰⁶⁴

Everything from the "provincial" identity of the advisors to department to the name of a particular festival might entail suspicion of trying to reinforce the Chinese consciousness and therefore incur attack from the DPP.¹⁰⁶⁵

Critical of the DPP's simplistic and narrow-minded policies, Liao declares that Taiwan's 'transnationalized situation demands that we re-align our cultural policy...toward a vision that is at once more imaginative and pragmatic.'¹⁰⁶⁶

¹⁰⁶⁰ See Chapter Eight p.401, fn. 1301

¹⁰⁶¹ Ma Ying-jeou, in *Taipei Biennial - Great Theatre of the World*, TFAM, Taipei, 2002, p.3.

¹⁰⁶² Lung Ying-tai, Director Cultural Affairs Bureau, 'Forward', in *Great Theatre of the World*, 2002, p.5

¹⁰⁶³ See Chapter Two p.117.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Liao Hsien-hao, 'Why Don't Ask the Chinese', University of Western Sydney (public lecture), 2007.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Liao Hsien-hao, 'Why Don't Ask the Chinese?', University of Western Sydney, 2007.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Liao Hsien-hao, 'Why Don't Ask the Chinese?', University of Western Sydney, 2007.

During an interview in 2011 Liao told me that 'ninety-nine per cent of contemporary art is influenced by Western culture' and the key issue when he was Director of Cultural Affairs was how to 'localise Taiwan art', or to 'interpret it in a local context'. He added that the Taipei Biennial's new local-global curatorial model, which the TFAM had introduced, was one means by which this might be achieved.¹⁰⁶⁷

As Taiwan's premier international biennial, the Taipei Biennial offered a mechanism through which the KMT's broader political and cultural objectives could be realised. In the Preface to the 2004 catalogue, Ma Ying-jeou declares that the central aims of the Taipei city government are to make 'culture more international', to 'increase our cultural interaction with the international community' and hence to 'keep Taipei at the forefront of global trends.'¹⁰⁶⁸ As a platform for international dialogue and exchange, the Taipei Biennial was viewed politically as a valuable instrument for marketing and for cultural diplomacy. According to the city government, the Taipei Biennial was a vehicle that would help to enrich Taiwan's culture and simultaneously promote Taipei's 'international, metropolitan, [and] richly complex culture' to local and international audiences alike.¹⁰⁶⁹ Ma also remarks:

...The Taipei Biennial has allowed our city to learn from and incorporate the best qualities of artistic traditions from around the world, and to gradually develop a diverse form of cultural expression that is at once uniquely Taiwanese and fully international. Likewise, as a channel for city marketing, the Taipei Biennial has promoted the city's image to the world, standing on the front lines of Taipei's efforts in cultural diplomacy.¹⁰⁷⁰

Ma's three points are especially noteworthy because they signify a turning point in Taiwan's identity trajectory, at least on a municipal level, and in the context of the TFAM's programs during the late 1990s. First, Ma refers to

¹⁰⁶⁷ Liao Hsien-hao, Interview with the Author, 2011, Canberra.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Ma Ying-jeou, 'Foreword', in *2004 Taipei Biennial - Do You Believe in Reality?*, TFAM, Taipei, 2004, p.9.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Ma Ying-jeou, in *Do You Believe in Reality?*, 2004, p.9. Reference to Taipei's 'metropolitan' culture was also made by Lung Ying-tai, in her 'Forward', in *Great Theatre of the World*, 2002, p.5.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Ma Ying-jeou, in *Do You Believe in Reality?*, 2004, p.9.

'Taipei' and the 'city', rather than 'Taiwan', thus avoiding drawing attention to the nation and implicitly challenging the 'one China' policy. This emphasis on the city rather than on the nation was consistent with the rhetoric surrounding the de-territorialising effects of globalisation. It was also in accord with the KMT's conventional understanding of 'one China', and, when Ma became Taiwan's President in 2007, he continued to uphold this view, which helped him promote Taiwan's closer relations with China (discussed in Chapter Eight). Under Ma's Mayoral and later Presidential influence this conception of Taiwan was articulated in the museological representation of art. During the late 1990s, for example, terms such as 'Taiwan', 'nation' and 'identity', which had been associated with Taiwan independence and had featured prominently in many of the TFAM's earlier exhibition titles (e.g., *Taiwan Art* and *Quest for Identity*) were either relegated to a sub-title or disappeared completely. Instead, relatively nondescript exhibition titles were chosen for the Taipei Biennial, including *The Sky is the Limit*, *Great Theatre of the World* and *Do You Believe in Reality?*, that re-focused attention on the world rather than on the nation. In the Venice Biennale, titles such as *Art Taiwan* (1995) and *Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Faces* (1997), which made Taiwan centre-stage, were supplanted by the *Living Cell*, *Limbo Zone*, *The Spectre of Freedom* and *Atopia*. Such titles, given their lack of cultural specificity, might have referenced any country represented in this biennale and, as this analysis demonstrates, territorially defined notions of 'location' and place were not foregrounded in these exhibitions.

Secondly, and most significantly, Ma not only acknowledges but embraces the effects of international (i.e. Western) influences on Taiwan's artistic development. In contrast to Taiwanese cultural nationalists, such as Ni Tsai-chin (倪再沁) who contended that Western modernism has contaminated the

roots of Taiwan's native culture,¹⁰⁷¹ Ma considers that Taiwan's culture has grown from and been enriched by these international artistic influences. As a vehicle for social instruction and cultural edification, Ma believed that, under this new exhibition structure, the Taipei Biennial would inspire local audiences to 'observe and learn' about other cultures and, ultimately, help to 'expand the vision of people in Taiwan'.¹⁰⁷² Liao Hsien-hao subtly affirms these aspirations in his foreword in the 2004 Taipei Biennial exhibition catalogue:

As a modern, international city, Taipei has always valued cultural exchange with other countries, and has actively promoted its own international art activities. Through these activities new lessons are learned and experience is gained.¹⁰⁷³

The former TFAM employee, Lai Ying-ying (賴瑛瑛), also acknowledges that the Taipei Biennial offers local audiences 'an extraordinary opportunity to see the world from a new angle, to appreciate different cultures [...], and in turn reflect [...] on where Taiwan stands in relation to the greater world'.¹⁰⁷⁴ These views are indicative of an intensifying political and cultural desire to ensure Taiwan remained at 'the forefront of global trends'.¹⁰⁷⁵

Thirdly, in his statement Ma re-envisages Taiwan's cultural identity as both local *and* global: as '[both having] Taiwanese characteristics and foreign [characteristics]' (本土特色與異國), the latter of which implicitly refers to various cultures, including Japanese, Chinese, and Western, which have shaped Taiwan's identity. This remark implies that the local and global co-exist as distinct but also as relational, mutually dependent entities that are not culturally divergent as some Taiwanese nationalists suggested. Here, it must be emphasised that the term 'Taiwanese', or *bentu* (本土), relates to Taiwan culture generally, and should not be confused with ethnic or political

¹⁰⁷¹ Ni Tsai-chin, 'Western Art Made in Taiwan', in *Taiwan Consciousness*, 1994, pp.37-88 (in Chinese). See Chapter One for information on Ni and this book see Chapter One pp.72-73.

¹⁰⁷² Ma Ying-jeou, 'Foreword', in *2006 Taipei Biennial - Dirty Yoga*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 2006, p.11.

¹⁰⁷³ Liao Hsien-hao, 'Foreword', in *Do You Believe in Reality?*, 2004, p.13.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Lai Ying-ying, *Mapping Taiwan*, conference paper, 2008, p.10.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Ma Ying-jeou, in *Do You Believe in Reality?*, 2004, p.9.

separatist notions of *bentu*, which the DPP and independence supporters promoted during the 1990s. In the Preface to the *Taipei Art Prize* for emergent local artists, Ma emphasises the importance of simultaneously 'transcending ethnicity' and 'valuing native roots' while also 'interacting with the world'.¹⁰⁷⁶

This mission to locate the local in a global context was manifest in the Taipei Biennial, and the efforts made to break down cultural dichotomies and generate opportunities for transcultural dialogue in this exhibition have been specifically noted by local and international art critics. For example, the Taiwan art critic and curator, and recently appointed TFAM director,¹⁰⁷⁷ Huang Hai-ming (黃海鳴), applauded the removal of cultural binaries and the opening up of museological discourse to encompass the local *and* global. He notes that 'the simplistic principle of opposition' that 'once dominated Taiwan contemporary art' has been discarded in favour of the revelation of Taiwan's true cultural 'complexity'.¹⁰⁷⁸ Internationally, art critics have also commented on the ways in which the Taipei Biennial strives to be global,¹⁰⁷⁹ but is also 'firmly grounded in a Taiwanese context'.¹⁰⁸⁰ As one international art critic puts it, the Taipei Biennial brings 'contemporary international art to Taiwan and...examine[s] local art in the context of the international art community'.¹⁰⁸¹

¹⁰⁷⁶ Ma Ying-jeou, 'Preface from the Mayor', in *2001 Taipei Arts Prize*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, p.7.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Huang was appointed Director of the TFAM in July 2012.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Huang Hai-ming, 'Art or Commerce Everywhere? The New Artistic Language and Alternative Autonomy of The Sky is the Limit', in *Sky is the Limit*, 2000, p.65.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Several reviewers have commented upon the homogeneous themes and global art-speak underpinning these Taipei Biennials. See for example, Richard Vine 'Report from Taipei II: The Blurennial', *Art in America*, vol. 95, no.6, 2007, p.111; Paul Ardenne, 'Biennial 2004: Taipei', *Art Press*, L-S Torgoff (trans.), no. 309, 2005, p.72.

¹⁰⁸⁰ See Caroline Gluck, '2004 Taipei Biennial - Taipei's Artistic Take on Reality', *International Herald Tribune*, 14 Nov. 2004. <http://www.longmarchproject.com/english/e-discourse68.htm> (accessed 24/4/2012); Frederika Whitehead, 'Letter from Taipei - 08 Taipei Biennial', *Art Monthly*, no.320, London, 2008, p.39. <http://www.exacteditions.com/exact/browse/334/351/4349/3/41> (accessed 24/8/2011); Barbara Casavecchia, 'Taipei Biennial', *Flash Art* (international), vol.33, no.215, Nov/Dec 2000, p.103.

¹⁰⁸¹ Jane Ingram Allen, 'Taipei, Taiwan: 2004 Taipei Biennial - 'Do You Believe in Reality - Taipei Fine Arts Museum', *Sculpture*, vol. 24, no.4, May 2005, p.77.

The confluence between the local and the global is an inexorable part of the processes of globalisation and transculturalism, in which national boundaries become increasingly porous, and where diverse peoples and cultures, which had been separated, geographically and historically, meet and interact within 'contact zones'.¹⁰⁸² As Kevin Robins observes, within this 'de-centred' global space, 'economies and cultures are thrown into intense and immediate contact with each other' forging 'new and intricate relations between global space and local space'.¹⁰⁸³ Appadurai and Featherstone also emphasise the spatial and relational dynamics between the local and global. Importantly, neither of them conflate or attempt to 'blend'¹⁰⁸⁴ or integrate the local and global into a unified entity in the way that the term 'glocalisation',¹⁰⁸⁵ as used by Roland Robertson, implies. Both rightly argue against the totalising logic of globalisation and corresponding views that equate it with cultural homogenisation, asserting that globalisation is not a 'singular, integrated and unified conceptual scheme' but rather 'a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order' in which the local and global co-exist as discrete, relational and sometimes divergent forces.¹⁰⁸⁶ While acknowledging the hegemonic effects of globalisation, Arif Dirlik theorises how globalisation has also empowered the local and contributed towards a radical re-assessment of the local, which is no longer characterised by a nostalgic longing for the past, or by 'hegemonic nationalist yearnings', but

¹⁰⁸² Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Routledge, London, 1992. Pratt uses this term in an historical context to discuss colonialism and power relations. However, I've used the term in a broader theoretical context, in relation to social spaces and the local/global dialectic. For a discussion of this term used in a Chinese context, in relation to history and Orientalism, see Arif Dirlik, 'Chinese History and the Question of Orientalism', *History and Theory*, vol. 35, no.4, 1996, pp.96-118. <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0018-2656%28199612%2935%3A4%3C96%3ACHATQO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-9> (accessed 5/8/2011).

¹⁰⁸³ Robins, 'Tradition and Translation', in *Representing the Nation*, 1999, pp.22-23.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Featherstone, *Undoing Culture*, 1995, p.118.

¹⁰⁸⁵ According to Robertson, 'glocalisation' refers to the co-presence of universalising and particularising tendencies. See Robertson 'Glocalisation: Time-Space and Homogeneity - Heterogeneity', in *Global Modernities*, 1995, pp.25-45.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Featherstone, *Undoing Culture*, 1995, p.6; Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 1996, p.47.

by a forward-thinking 'critical localism', which both resists and selectively incorporates the effects of globalisation.¹⁰⁸⁷

As the following discussion on the Taipei and Venice biennials will demonstrate, the nexus between the local and global was manifest in the museological representation of art. These exhibitions were structured around themes that had local and global significance, and domestic issues were framed in a global paradigm, linking local problems with global concerns. The 2000 Taipei Biennial has been selected as the primary case study because, with hindsight, its practices (curatorial structure, exhibition themes, and artistic selections) laid the foundations for subsequent Taipei and Venice biennials over the decade.

The Taipei Biennial (2000-2010)

Consistent with Ma Ying-jeou's objective to 'increase our cultural interaction with the international community' and 'keep Taipei at the forefront of global trends',¹⁰⁸⁸ the new TFAM Director, Huang Tsai-lang, implemented a new curatorial strategy in 2000 for the Taipei Biennial.¹⁰⁸⁹ It was based on the pairing of a local and international curator to work together on the exhibition. According to the Director, the aim of this approach was 'to encourage a joint effort based on dialogue and cooperation', and to 'maximize the integration of this international exhibition with the dynamics of the local climate'.¹⁰⁹⁰ With an emphasis on local-global collaboration, this curatorial model differed significantly from the previous two Taipei Biennials, which had been based on

¹⁰⁸⁷ Dirlik, 'Global in the Local', in *Global Local*, 1996, pp.21-24, 38.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Ma Ying-jeou, in *Do You Believe in Reality?*, 2004, p.9.

¹⁰⁸⁹ This new curatorial model was followed until 2012 when, after the TFAM's call for submissions, only one principal curator was appointed - the Berlin-based curator and critic, Anselm Franke. However, as part of his proposal, Franke collaborated with six other curators (selected by himself) to develop six 'mini-museums' which were self-contained spaces but which formed part of the whole exhibition. According to the TFAM's press release, it received two submissions from local curators and three from international curators. No reason was given for this change in the Taipei Biennial's curatorial structure.

http://artforum.com/uploads/guide.001/id27639/press_release.pdf (accessed 20/12/2011).

¹⁰⁹⁰ Huang Tsai-lang, in *The Sky is the Limit*, 2000, p.8.

a comparatively conventional top-down curatorial structure that was either exclusively local or exclusively international.¹⁰⁹¹

The cross-cultural collaborative curatorial model was not new as it had been used in various configurations by other museums across the world,¹⁰⁹² precisely because it was seen to offer a more 'genuine' consultative process that engendered 'mutual respect'.¹⁰⁹³ However, the TFAM was one of the first art museums in Asia to adopt this model, attesting to its commitment to remain responsive, competitive and visible in the global arts community.¹⁰⁹⁴

Notwithstanding this, some local curators and critics have questioned the extent to which this cross-cultural curatorial model, which has also been described as a 'mentoring programme'¹⁰⁹⁵ for emerging local curators, is in fact a genuine 'joint' effort. According to these critics, the foreign curator's senior status is ensured by the TFAM's selection process,¹⁰⁹⁶ thus creating an

¹⁰⁹¹ In the 1996 Taipei Biennial the TFAM appointed a local curatorial panel to select works; in 1998 Fumio Nanjo from Japan was the sole curator.

¹⁰⁹² In the Asia-Pacific region, the Queensland Art Gallery's (QAG) *Asia-Pacific Triennial* (APT) was one of the first to adopt this structure. Until 2002, the APT involved a large team of curatorial advisors and consultants from Australia (including staff from the QAG) and from participating countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Since 2002, the APT has been curated by museum staff.

¹⁰⁹³ Caroline Turner, 'Introduction - from Extraregionalism to Intraregionalism?', in *The First Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*, QAG, Brisbane, 1993, p.8.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Like the Taipei Biennial, the Pusan Biennale began as an international biennial in 1998 and adopted a similar cross-cultural curatorial structure in 2000; followed by the Shanghai Biennial and Gwangju Biennale in 2002 (although the Gwangju Biennial actually began in 1995). Amongst other biennials/triennials held in the region that subsequently adopted this co-curatorial model are: the Guangzhou Triennial (that began in 2002 and that adopted this curatorial model in 2005), Yogyakarta Biennale (that was international in 2005 when it adopted this model) and Yokohama that began in 2001 and adopted this model in 2008.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Lin Mun-lee, the former director of the TFAM who was working as the Director of the National Culture and Arts Foundation, describes this curatorial model as a 'mentoring programme' and as a form of 'matchmaking' in which 'an experienced European curator and an emerging Taiwanese one'. However, after the curatorial tensions in the 2004 Taipei Biennial, Lin reportedly conceded that this combination of curators does not always work. See Susan Kendzulak, 'Examining the Taipei Biennial's Highs and Lows', *Taipei Times*, 26 Dec. 2004, p.19. <http://www.taipaitimes.com/News/feat/archives/2004/12/26/2003216853/1> (accessed 24/5/2011).

¹⁰⁹⁶ The TFAM selects the international curator first, and according to critics, their international status means they will receive privileged treatment from the TFAM and this establishes their 'senior' status.

inherent imbalance of power in the curatorial partnership. Even foreign art critics in Taiwan describe this curatorial model as a 'de-facto hierarchy',¹⁰⁹⁷ and one that reinforces Western 'paternalism'.¹⁰⁹⁸ This issue of curatorial parity came to a head in the 2004 Taipei Biennial when the local co-curator, Amy Huei-hua Cheng resigned days before the opening, complaining that her European counterpart, Barbara Vanderlinden, had dominated the curatorial process. Cheng purportedly claimed Taiwan had 'no subjectivity' and was under-represented in the exhibition.¹⁰⁹⁹ Despite these objections, which centre primarily on issues of differential treatment and perceptions of Western dominance, most critics, including Cheng, concede that even under this curatorial structure the biennial has impacted positively on the development of Taiwan's art field and significantly opened up visual arts discourse.¹¹⁰⁰

In the context of museological practice in Taiwan, the implementation of this cross-cultural curatorial model demonstrated a willingness to engage with divergent and unorthodox views, which had the potential to challenge both the authority of the museum and the nation-state. Several international art critics have commented upon the controversial and 'politically charged' aspects of the Taipei Biennial claiming, for example, that compared with the Shanghai

¹⁰⁹⁷ David Frazier, 'Taiwan's Upstart Biennial', *Art Asia Pacific*, no.62, March/April 2009, pp.62-63.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Amy Cheng, 'Emergence of Taiwanese Contemporary Art in Relationship to the Taipei Biennial', *Digital Visions*, University of British Columbia.

www.ontherundesign.com/Artists/Amy_Cheng2.htm (accessed 26/8/2011); Susan Kendzulak, 'Hold That Pose for the Taipei Biennial', *Taipei Times*, 9 Nov. 2006, p.15. <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/feat/archives/2006/11/09/2003335564> (accessed 24/6/2011); also Lai Ying-ying, *Mapping Taiwan*, (conference paper), 2008, p.14

¹⁰⁹⁹ Five out of thirty-two artists were from Taiwan in this exhibition which Vanderlinden purportedly defended as being significantly more than in the Shanghai Biennial. Wu Chin-tao, 'Biennials without Borders', *Landmark Exhibitions Issue, Tate Papers Online Research Journal*, Autumn, 2009.

<http://www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/tatepapers/09autumn/chin.shtm> (accessed 6/9/2011 - this site has since been removed); Frazier, 'Taiwan's Upstart Biennial', *Art Asia Pacific*, 2009, p.63; Andrew Maerkele, 'Curating by Committee: Behind Asia's Biennials', *Art Asia Pacific*, no. 50, 2006, p.92; Susan Kendzulak, 'Examining the Taipei Biennial's Highs and Lows', *Taipei Times*, 26 Dec. 2004, p.19. <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/feat/archives/2004/12/26/2003216853/1> (accessed 24/5/2011).

¹¹⁰⁰ Amy Cheng, 'Emergence of Taiwanese Contemporary Art', *Digital Visions* (online).

Biennial, it was generally regarded as more adventurous and self-critical.¹¹⁰¹ Exhibitions focused on art as a form of political and social activism, and selected works engaged with Taiwan-China issues;¹¹⁰² reflected upon struggles for national sovereignty;¹¹⁰³ and explored contentious sexual issues, including pornography.¹¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, in these biennials, the museum became a target for institutional critique in a series of curatorial and artistic interventions that deconstructed and defaced the TFAM's architectural structures, and subverted museological conventions.¹¹⁰⁵

Under this new curatorial paradigm, local independent curators and artists gained unprecedented opportunities to develop their skills and expand their cultural networks, and for some the Taipei Biennial provided a springboard for an international career. For example, prior to curating the 2000 Taipei Biennial, Hsu Wen-rei's curatorial experience was minimal¹¹⁰⁶ and he had eked

¹¹⁰¹ Whitehead, 'Letter from Taipei', *Art Monthly*, 2008, p.39 (online); Barbara Pollack, 'Taipei Biennial – Focus-Asia', *Art in America*, vol.96, no.11, Dec. 2008, pp.104-106; Ardenne, 'Biennial 2004: Taipei', *Art Press*, 2005, p.72; Vine, 'Report from Taipei II', *Art in America*, 2007, p.109.

¹¹⁰² For example, Chinese artists Cao Fei re-casting Sun Yat-sen the 'Father of Modern China'; and Liu Wei's reflections on Tiananmen in the 2006 and 2008 Taipei Biennials respectively. For a discussion on this latter work in the 2008 Taipei Biennial see Sophie McIntyre, 'Farewell?: A Review of the Shanghai Biennial, Guangzhou Triennial and the Taipei Biennial', *Art Monthly Australia*, no. 205, Nov. 2008, pp.24-30.

¹¹⁰³ For example, Nalini Malani's video installation on the struggle for independence in India, and An-My Le's work on the Vietnam War both of which were in the 2006 Taipei Biennial.

¹¹⁰⁴ Shu Lea Cheang's work in the 2000 Taipei Biennial purportedly caused a public 'scandal' as this Taiwan-born artist cast a porn film with live auditions in the TFAM's basement. Susan Kendzulak, 'The Taipei Biennial', *Taiwan Culture Portal*, 4 May 2007. http://culture.tw/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=139&Itemid=157 (accessed 5/6/2011).

¹¹⁰⁵ Artist interventions include Sidney Stucki's 'branding' of the TFAM in the 2000 Taipei Biennial, and in the 2006 Taipei Biennial Regina Silveira's black adhesive vinyl footprints which, as Richard Vine remarks 'swarmed over pristine surfaces [in the museum and] disrupted any sense of cool, rational authority'. The inclusion of works produced in a range of non-traditional media, such as Katharina Grosse' mound of dirt displayed in the museum's foyer in the 2006 Taipei Biennial also challenged museological definitions of 'art'. See Vine, 'Report from Taipei II', *Art in America*, 2007, p.109. By the end of the decade, the museum was no longer the sole venue for the display of art, as works spanned sites across the city.

¹¹⁰⁶ Hsu's curatorial experience was limited to small and mostly local exhibitions presented in alternative art spaces including *Back from Home* (1997, Bamboo Curtain Studio, Taipei), *Thing-Made Things* (1998, IT Park, Taipei), *Exhibition of Chang Hsiao-chien and Hsia Yin: Two Youngest Artists in History* (co-produced with Ralf Schmitt, 1999, Hua-shan Cultural District, Taipei).

out a living mainly as a local freelance art writer. After co-curating the 2000 Taipei Biennial Hsu re-located to Berlin where he acquired a reputation as an 'ambassador'¹¹⁰⁷ for Taiwan contemporary art.¹¹⁰⁸ Eight years later he returned to Taiwan to co-curate the 2008 Taipei Biennial.¹¹⁰⁹ Hsu is representative of the new generation of urbane, multilingual transnational curators from Asia whose pathway, as Patrick Flores points out, was pioneered by Fumio Nanjo, Hou Hanru and Apinan Poshyananda.¹¹¹⁰ Emulating these curators' global, transcultural outlook, Hsu rejects the 'narrow nativism and its political and commercial implications', which, he says, dominated local visual arts discourse during the 1990s.¹¹¹¹ He champions those contemporary artists in Taiwan who '...do not only see themselves as living in more than one culture, but also in... "Third Cultures"'.¹¹¹² Mike Featherstone points out how these 'Third Culture' specialists perform a mediating role, working across and between different 'national cultures' and, while recognising the 'particularities of local cultures', maintain a 'flexible' 'global frame of reference'.¹¹¹³ This conception of art and artists operating in a Third Culture, both relational and spatial, was central to the 2000 and 2008 Taipei Biennials, which explored the effects of economic and cultural globalisation.

The 2000 Taipei Biennial: *The Sky is the Limit* (hereafter, *Sky is the Limit*, 無法無天) (fig. 7.1) was the first international Taipei Biennial¹¹¹⁴ employing

¹¹⁰⁷ Saskia Monshouwer, 'An Interview with Manray Hsu', *IIAS Newsletter*, no.26. <http://www.iias.nl/iiasn/26/asianart/26ART2.html> (accessed 8/6/2011)

¹¹⁰⁸ Hsu served as an international juror of the 49th Venice Biennale in 2001; the UNESCO Prize for the 7th Istanbul Biennial; and of the 2006 Hermes Prize for Korean Contemporary Artists. For more on exhibitions he has curated since 2000. http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/bien/taipei_biennial/2008/curators (accessed 19/4/2011).

¹¹⁰⁹ Hsu's co-curator of the 2000 Taipei Biennial was French curator Jerome Sans; in 2008 Vasif Kortun was the principal co-curator with a special section curated by Oliver Ressler.

¹¹¹⁰ See Chapter Two for further discussion on the rise of the Asian curator, and on Flores' analysis. Flores, *Past Periphery*, API Fellows (online); and 'Critical Curation/Curatorial Critique', *Critical Evaluation Reloaded*, 2006, pp.1-4.

¹¹¹¹ Hsu Wen-rei, 'Faces of Time' in *Face to Face*, 1999, p.18.

¹¹¹² Hsu Wen-rei, 'Faces of Time' in *Face to Face*, 1999, p.19.

¹¹¹³ Featherstone, *Undoing Culture*, 1995, pp.90-91.

¹¹¹⁴ Valerie Breuvart '2000 Taipei Biennial - Brief Article', *ArtForum*, vol. 39, no. 4, Dec. 2000. <http://www.questia.com/library/1G1-68697167/2000-taipei-biennial> (accessed 8/2/2011).

this new curatorial framework, and included a diverse range of works by thirty-one artists spanning nineteen countries. Although half the participating artists in this exhibition were of Asian descent,¹¹¹⁵ compared to *Site of Desire*, which had focused on four countries in Northeast Asia, the conceptual and aesthetic scope of this second biennial was, as one critic described it, 'resolutely international.'¹¹¹⁶ The TFAM Director's view was that, 'unlike the deliberately Asian viewpoint' reflected in *Site of Desire*, this Taipei Biennial 'takes a completely open 'sky's the limit' approach'¹¹¹⁷, indicated by the exhibition title, which reflects the concept of freedom, of not being constrained by boundaries, and also not heeding authority.

In a spirit of 'open dialogue'¹¹¹⁸ Hsu and his French co-curator Jerome Sans sought to create a platform for experimentation and inter-cultural exchange between artists and audiences. They focused on notions of cultural pluralism, or what they describe as a 'culture of remix', which effectively challenges fixed notions of identity. The curators claim was that 'We are now entering a new century, a new age, in which everything is available, accessible, recordable, and ready for consumption.'¹¹¹⁹ The curators consciously rejected the nationally and regionally-defined notions of identity, which the two previous Taipei Biennials, *Quest for Identity* and *Site of Desire*, sought to evoke. They declared that 'Boundaries are dissolving and re-establishing in nanoseconds. By sharing a culture of remix, we now live under one big sky and are collectively facing an

In her review of the 2000 Biennial Susan Kendzulak also emphasises the international aspects of this exhibition, Susan Kendzulak, 'A Short Tour of the Taipei Biennial 2000 Shows the Exhibit is Long on Diversity', *Taipei Times*, 17 Sept. 2000, p.18.

<http://taipeitimes.com/News/feat/archives/2000/09/17/0000053702/1> (accessed 9/2/2011).

¹¹¹⁵ *The Sky is the Limit* featured thirty-one artists, sixteen of which were classified as 'Asian'.

¹¹¹⁶ Breuvar, '2000 Taipei Biennial', *ArtForum*, 2000 (online).

¹¹¹⁷ Huang Tsai-lang, in *The Sky is the Limit*, 2000, p.8.

¹¹¹⁸ Jerome Sans, 'The Sky is the Limit: An Open Dialogue', in *The Sky is the Limit*, 2000, p.12.

¹¹¹⁹ 2000 Taipei Biennial website, TFAM. http://proj1.sinica.edu.tw/~suchu/2000-Taipei/2000-Taipei/index_e.html (accessed 9/2/2011).

unknowable future.'¹¹²⁰ Although this is a vague statement, nevertheless it reflects a shift in museological discourse in Taiwan, and the curators' embrace of a more open, global view of the world, which Hsu, in particular, promoted.

This exhibition explored universal concerns that focused on the 'human dimension' of our collective 'living experience'.¹¹²¹ It addressed contemporary global issues relating to the impact of digital technologies, consumerism, and increased mobility, which, as one reviewer remarks, are common themes explored in biennials held across the world.¹¹²² Exhibiting artists generally produced works that engaged in broader political, philosophical and personal issues relating to global mobility and border-crossings, the prevalence and speed of technology, and how these have impacted on perceptions of reality. As the curator, Amy Cheng observes, Taiwan artists in this exhibition were more interested in 'self expression' and in 'everyday events' than the 'national themes' that characterised the first Taipei Biennial in 1996.¹¹²³

While national themes were played down, consistent with the museum's objectives, the curators of this biennial endeavoured to deliver an exhibition with local and global relevance. According to co-curator Jerome Sans, 'Our chief objective...was to create a biennial specific to the setting in which it is held, rather than holding a generic event that could easily take place anywhere.'¹¹²⁴ In contrast to the previous two Taipei Biennials that comprised mostly static, two dimensional works,¹¹²⁵ this exhibition included several site-specific and socially-engaged installations. Focusing on the relational aspects of artistic production, the curators created opportunities for dialogue and collaboration between artists and local audiences, incorporating several

¹¹²⁰ 2000 Taipei Biennial website, TFAM. http://proj1.sinica.edu.tw/~suchu/2000-Taipei/2000-Taipei/index_e.html (accessed 9/2/2011).

¹¹²¹ Sans, in *The Sky is the Limit*, 2000, p.12

¹¹²² Casavecchia, 'Taipei Biennial', *Flash Art*, 2000, p.103.

¹¹²³ Amy Cheng, 'Emergence of Taiwanese Contemporary Art', *Digital Visions* (online).

¹¹²⁴ Sans, in *The Sky is the Limit*, 2000, p.12.

¹¹²⁵ In *Site of Desire*, Xu Bing's 'Classroom Calligraphy' was one of the very few interactive works in this exhibition.

interactive works that were 'playful'¹¹²⁶ and invited audience participation.¹¹²⁷ As the local art reviewer, Susan Kendzulak comments, this emphasis on audience interaction and artistic experimentation 'challenges the function of a museum [and] the traditional idea of art [in Taiwan].'¹¹²⁸ As a reflection of this culture of remix, aesthetic distinctions between art, film, music and popular culture became indistinguishable. Artists worked across a wide range of media, from found objects to new media, and performance. According to Kendzulak, one of the most popular works was 'Everything NT\$20', by Thai artist Surasi Kusolwong who encouraged museum visitors to purchase, for a nominal price of NT\$20, assorted items in this installation comprising pillows, toys and clothing.¹¹²⁹

Huang Hai-ming observes that local audiences were often surprised by the 'familiarity' of found objects and materials as typically seen in a market place rather than a museum.¹¹³⁰ Given the increasing prevalence of multimedia and cross-disciplinary practices, local and international critics began to question the definition of 'art'. They described this and other exhibitions as a 'bargain store'¹¹³¹ or a 'jumble sale'¹¹³² and questioned 'if the aesthetic component of art has disappeared entirely.'¹¹³³ However, as the essayists in the catalogue of the 2000 Taipei Biennial, Huang Hai-ming and Chen Kuan-hsing (陳光興) remark, in Taiwan's highly consumer-driven culture, art cannot and should not

¹¹²⁶ Kendzulak, 'A Short Tour', *Taipei Times*, 2000, p.18 (online).

¹¹²⁷ Amongst these participatory-based works were: Erwin Wurm's *One Minute Sculpture*, in which museum visitors were instructed to 'interact' with objects; *The Game of Democracy* by Meschac Gaba, who created an interactive puzzle enabling audiences to join the 'postcolonial game'; Jun'ya Yamaide's large blue balloons, to which visitors attached a Chinese character, before being released to the skies; and Lee Mingwei's *Shrine Project* in which museum visitors were invited to contribute their own personal 'sacred objects' and contemplate the meaning of sacredness in their daily lives.

¹¹²⁸ Kendzulak, 'A Short Tour', *Taipei Times*, 2000, (online).

¹¹²⁹ Kendzulak, 'A Short Tour', *Taipei Times*, 2000, (online).

¹¹³⁰ Huang Hai-ming, 'Art of Commerce Everywhere?', in *The Sky is the Limit*, 2000, p.58.

¹¹³¹ Huang Hai-ming, 'Art of Commerce', in *The Sky is the Limit*, 2000, p.58.

¹¹³² Ardenne, 'Taipei Biennial 2004', *Art Press*, 2005, p.72. This comment was made about the 2004 Taipei Biennial.

¹¹³³ Ingram Allen, *Sculpture*, 2005, p.77.

separate itself from reality.¹¹³⁴ Reflecting on the impact of globalisation on society, culture and art, Huang Hai-ming, questions the meaning of 'artistic autonomy' and calls on artists to 'appropriate the language of the commercial world', and use it to 'comment on this world.'¹¹³⁵ Although Huang is not a Taiwanese nationalist, his belief that art should reflect and engage with society is in accord with those of many advocates of Taiwan consciousness in art, such as Ni Tsai-chin who rejected formalist, non-representational art.

One of the most salient aspects of *The Sky is the Limit* was that artists, born and/or raised in Taiwan, but residing overseas were not only acknowledged but constituted a significant proportion of this exhibition. Of the six participating artists specified in the catalogue as originating from Taiwan, half resided overseas permanently, while the other half were living between Taipei and cities across the world.¹¹³⁶ The public recognition given to these artists, augmented in other biennials held during this decade, signified a major discursive shift in the museological representation of Taiwan art. In *Site of Desire* several works by Asian artists based overseas, and particularly Chinese artists, were displayed. Significantly, however, the twelve participating artists from Taiwan all lived on the island, underscoring the reality that at that time the artists' location still determined whether or not they were perceived as Taiwanese.

As *Taiwan Art* and *Quest for Identity* attest, during the 1990s the artist's birthplace, ethnicity and place of residence primarily determined the selection

¹¹³⁴ Huang Hai-ming, 'Art of Commerce', in *The Sky is the Limit*, 2000, p.59. Chen Kuan-hsing, 'Taiwan's Response to the Consumer Society', in *The Sky is the Limit*, 2000, pp.20-25. By 2008, however, Huang Hai-ming was more critical of the ways this and later Taipei Biennials had transformed the TFAM into a 'globalised supermarket', and he called for greater local dialogue, in Frazier, 'Taiwan's Upstart Biennial', *Art Asia Pacific*, p.62.

¹¹³⁵ Huang Hai-ming, 'Art of Commerce', in *The Sky is the Limit*, 2000, p.59

¹¹³⁶ Lee Mingwei and Shu Lea Cheang lived in the United States; Chang Hsia-fei lived in Paris; and Wang Jun-jieh, Michael Lin and Hung Tung-lu were living between Taipei, Europe and China.

criteria in exhibitions of Taiwan art. During this period, 'Third Culture Kids'¹¹³⁷ such as Michael Lin Ming-hong (林明弘) (alias Michael Lin), who was born in Japan, educated in America, and who lived as an adult between Taipei and Paris, were essentially regarded in Taiwan as 'foreign' or, colloquially, as 'trapeze artists' (空中飛人), belonging to no specific place.¹¹³⁸ At the height of Taiwanese nationalism, when living predominantly in Taipei, Lin was an active member in Taiwan's arts community but, nevertheless, was largely ignored or overlooked by art museums in Taiwan. However, by the late 1990s, with the global rise of Asian art, Lin began to attract international attention and, in 2000, he was chosen as one of the six local artists in the Taipei Biennial (fig. 7.2). A year later he was one of five artists representing Taiwan in the Venice Biennale. Since this time, his massive phoenix and floral wall and floor paintings have featured in major international biennials.¹¹³⁹ Currently living between Shanghai and Taipei, Lin has become renowned internationally, somewhat paradoxically as one of *Taiwan's* leading contemporary artists.¹¹⁴⁰

In his discussion of the cultural dimensions of globalisation, Appadurai observes how the mobilisation or 'flow' of people, ideas and values across geopolitical borders is eroding territorially-bounded conceptions of ethnicity,

¹¹³⁷ 'Third Culture Kids' (TCK) is defined as '[A] person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background.' David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*, Nicholas Brealey Publishing, Boston, 2009 (rev. ed.) (orig. pub. 1999), p.19.

¹¹³⁸ This term is used to describe people from 'trans-Pacific families', Sau-ling C. Wong cited in Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan*, p.233. Other terms include 'parachute kids' to describe children who live in the United States, and whose parents, or at least father, remain in Taiwan to work, who are called 'astronauts'.

¹¹³⁹ Between 2000 and 2010 Lin's work has featured in more than seven international biennials/triennials including: Istanbul (2001), Venice (2001), Liverpool (2002), Brisbane (2002), Gwangju (2002), Moscow (2007) and Fukuoka (2009). In addition he has participated in forty-one international exhibitions, including sixteen solo shows.

¹¹⁴⁰ Although notably, in the second Guangzhou Triennial in 2006 in China in which Lin participated he was classified as coming from 'Paris'.

identity and locality.¹¹⁴¹ Globalisation, he says, has not only 'shrunk distance' and 'shifted key relationships' within and between communities, but it has also 'obscured the lines' between our sense of identity and place.¹¹⁴² Alternative forms of identity are emerging that are fluid and unfixed and, according to Appadurai, are increasingly less determined or defined by ethnicity, location, or by our 'national allegiances'. Within this 'de-territorialised' global order, artists who maintained a transnational status were no longer 'marginal or exceptional', but were an integral part of the 'cultural dynamic of urban life'.¹¹⁴³ In the context of Taiwan's cultural imaginary, transnational artists such as Michael Lin and Lin Shumin (林書民), who live between Shanghai and Taipei, as well as New York-based artists, Shu Lea Cheang (鄭淑麗) and Lee Mingwei (李明維), personify the lived experience of globalisation that the government and museum are seeking to invoke. As such, it is not surprising that these artists became increasingly visible in both local and international exhibitions of Taiwan art. After participating in the Taipei Biennial, Michael Lin, Cheang and Lee, the last of whom was described in the *Taipei Times* as 'one of *Taiwan's* [my emphasis] most promising young artists',¹¹⁴⁴ were chosen as representatives of Taiwan in the Venice Biennale. In 2003, Lin Shumin was invited by the TFAM to curate the Venice Biennale marking the first TFAM selection of a curator outside Taiwan. It is also noteworthy that, in the 2006 Taipei Biennial, *Dirty Yoga* (限制級瑜珈), co-curated by Dan Cameron and the

¹¹⁴¹ In her analysis of the national composition of artists represented in one of the most prominent international biennials, *Documenta*, Wu Chin-tao suggests that, these 'global cultural flows' have not eroded centre-periphery binaries to the extent that Appadurai's thesis might suggest. She demonstrates how 'artistic flows' are essentially 'centred' and mediated by Euro-America. Wu Chin-tao, *Biennials without Borders?*, Tate Papers, 2009, pp.1-8 (online). Wu's more circumspect and critical view of globalisation is shared by other scholars and anti-globalisation activists who have questioned its democratising effects.

¹¹⁴² Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 1996, pp.9-10.

¹¹⁴³ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 1996, pp.48-49, 10, 171. The relationship between globalisation, migration, the diaspora and changing conceptions of identity and place are well documented by Nikos Papastergiadis in *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalization, Deterritorialization, and Hybridity*, Blackwell Publishers, Massachusetts, 2000; and *Dialogues in the Diasporas: Essays and Conversations on Cultural Identity*, Rivers Oram Press, London, 1998.

¹¹⁴⁴ Chang, Ju-ping. 'The Men Behind the Installations', *Taipei Times*, 3 Sept. 2000, p.17. <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/feat/archives/2000/09/03/51845> (accessed 6/9/2011).

local artist turned curator, Wang Jun-Jieh, half the participating artists were based in the United States.¹¹⁴⁵

A further example of the cross-culturalisation of museological discourse in Taiwan was the appointment in 2008 of an international curator who, for the first time, was neither Japanese nor Euro-American but Turkish. In her sociological analysis of international biennial trends, the academic Wu Chin-tao (吳金桃) asserts that museums in Taiwan and across Asia, have conventionally aspired to work with curators from the West, and specifically Euro-America. In Wu's opinion, Western curators 'provide the aura...and the legitimately sanctioned access to the international biennial circuits that only their Western credentials can guarantee.'¹¹⁴⁶ In this account, Wu claims the privileging of the 'Other' is a manifestation of Taiwan's cultural cringe and of its 'inability to overcome its postcolonial past'.¹¹⁴⁷ Certainly, prior to 2008, the dominance of Western curators in the Taipei Biennial was specifically noted by local and international critics alike, and not only in the 2004 Taipei Biennial.¹¹⁴⁸ As such, the appointment of a Turkish curator and art writer, Vasif Kortun, signified a critical shift in museological discourse from Western and Taiwan-centred perspectives, to a transcultural outlook. As the art historian, Terry Smith, points out, in this new 'increasingly differentiated'¹¹⁴⁹ global order, centre-peripheries have collapsed. Smith explains that:

¹¹⁴⁵ The 2006 Taipei Biennial included six Taiwan artists: E Chen (陳逸堅, Taiwan-based in Los Angeles), Meng-te Chou (周孟德, Taiwan), Arthur Ou (歐宗翰, Taiwan/Los Angeles), VIVA (Taiwan) – Taipei, Hong-kai Wang (王虹凱, Taiwan/ New York), Chun-hui Wu (吳俊輝, Taiwan); and the collective TAKE2030 which included Shu Lea Cheang who is based in the United States.

¹¹⁴⁶ Wu Chin-tao, 'Occupation by Absence', *Journal of Visual Culture*, 2007, p.380 (online).

¹¹⁴⁷ Wu Chin-tao, 'Occupation by Absence' *Journal of Visual Culture*, 2007, pp. 379-380 (online).

¹¹⁴⁸ This issue of Western curatorial dominance was discussed in Chapter Two regarding Taiwan's representation in the 1995 Venice Biennale. In this Taipei Biennial context Richard Vine remarks that 'by all accounts', Dan Cameron was the 'dominant partner of the curatorial team' in the 2006 Taipei Biennial, who devised the exhibition title and theme. Vine, 'Report from Taipei', *Art in America*, 2007, p.109; Maerkle, 'Curating by Committee', *Art Asia Pacific*, 2006, p.92; Kendzulak 'Hold That Pose', *Taipei Times*, 2006, p.15 (online); and 'The Taipei Biennial', *Taiwan Culture Portal*, 2007, (online).

¹¹⁴⁹ Terry Smith, 'Worlds Pictured in Contemporary Art: Planes and Connectivities', (conference paper), *The World and World-Making in Art*, ANU, 11-13 Aug, 2011.

...art now comes *from* the whole world, from a growing accumulation of art-producing localities that no longer depends on the approval of a metropolitan center [...]. Geopolitical change has shifted the world picture from presumptions about [...] the universality of EuroAmerican values to recognition of the coexistence of difference, of disjunctive diversity, as characteristic of our contemporary being.¹¹⁵⁰

Wu Chin-tao maintains that Euro-America still occupies a central position in the global art world, both as a hub and as an arbiter of art.¹¹⁵¹ However, the TFAM's appointment of Kortun, and subsequently of the Iranian-born, Berlin-based writer and curator Tirdad Zolghadr in 2010, reflects a growing acknowledgement of alternative perspectives beyond the traditionally dominant Euro-American centres of art.

In its efforts to become more fully integrated into the global art sphere and ensure Taiwan 'remained at the forefront of international trends',¹¹⁵² the TFAM began looking across the Strait towards China, which had been attracting increasing global attention since the late 1990s. In a bid to boost the international profile of the Taipei Biennial, in 2007 the new Acting Director Hsieh Hsiao-yun (謝小韞) (Aug.2007 - Sept.2010)¹¹⁵³ initiated partnerships with the organisers of the Shanghai Biennial and Guangzhou Triennial, which customarily opened in the same year, albeit two months prior to the Taipei Biennial.¹¹⁵⁴ The development of this biennial coalition was part of a broader

¹¹⁵⁰ Terry Smith, 'Currents of World-Making in Contemporary Art', *World Art*, no. 2, 2011, (n.p), cited in Smith, 'Worlds Pictured', (conference paper), ANU, 2011.

¹¹⁵¹ In her analysis of the international biennial trend and issues of national representation, and specifically on the place of origin and residence of artists represented in *Documenta*, Wu Chin-tao demonstrates how Euro-America is still the chief hub and arbiter of exhibitions and artistic production. Wu, 'Biennials without Borders?', Tate Papers, 2009, pp.1-8 (online).

¹¹⁵² Ma Ying-jeou, in *Do You Believe in Reality?*, 2004, p.9.

¹¹⁵³ In Aug. 2007, Hsieh Hsiao-yun replaced Huang Tsai-lang. Hsieh, a former director of the Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Taoyuan County Government, was concurrently the Acting Director of TFAM in 2007 and deputy director of the Taipei City Government's Department of Cultural Affairs.

¹¹⁵⁴ As a result of these discussions, the TFAM brought forward its dates from November to September in line with these other international biennials. *Art Asia Pacific*, 'Taipei Biennial' (part of a special edition on Asian biennials), no.60, Sept-Oct 2008, p.188; *Flash Art*, 'Taipei Biennial holds meeting with Shanghai and Guangzhou', *Flash Art*, n.d.
http://www.flashartonline.com/interno.php?pagina=news_det&id=77&det=ok&title=Taipei-Biennial-holds-meeting-with-Shanghai-and-Guangzhou (accessed 7/7/2011).

effort made by museums across the region seeking to coordinate programming and capitalise on marketing opportunities.¹¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, it signified a critical turning point in Taiwan-China relations.¹¹⁵⁶

Given its stated desire to 'compete' on the world stage¹¹⁵⁷ it is not altogether surprising that the 2008 Taipei Biennial was the largest and most expensive presented thus far.¹¹⁵⁸ Co-curated by Vasif Kortun and Hsu Wen-rei, this untitled biennial featured works by more than forty-seven artists from twenty-six countries, including several artist collectives. Although it presented the highest number of artists overall, comparatively fewer artists from Taiwan were featured, a fact that was noted by members of the local arts community.¹¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, according to a local newspaper art writer, David Frazier, there was greater curatorial parity between Kortun and Hsu, the latter working between Berlin and Taipei.¹¹⁶⁰ Compared to *The Sky is the Limit*, it was more politically engaged and, for the first time, extended beyond the physical confines of the museum.¹¹⁶¹ Under the overarching theme of 'neo-liberal capitalist globalisation',¹¹⁶² it focused on the effects of global urban transformation, and artists explored diverse issues from illegal migrant labour

¹¹⁵⁵ Under the umbrella 'Art Compass', this coalition of biennials included the Gwangju and Yokohama triennales, the Shanghai and Singapore biennials. David Frazier, 'Taipei Biennial Finds Bearings with Art Compass – News and Opinion', *Art Asia Pacific*, no.57, Mar-Apr 2008, p.77.

¹¹⁵⁶ According to some reports, it was also a response to local criticisms about the structure, scheduling and budget of the Taipei Biennial, and more specifically to poor VIP attendance at the 2006 Taipei Biennial.

¹¹⁵⁷ Frazier, 'Taipei Biennial Finds Bearings', *Art Asia Pacific*, 2008, p.77; *Art Asia Pacific*, 'Taipei Biennial', 2008, p.188; Susan Kendzulak, 'Working out the Tension: Taipei Biennial 2004 and Taiwan Pavilion at the Venice Biennial 2005', *Art Asia Pacific*, vol.46, Fall 2005, p.24.

¹¹⁵⁸ The budget for the 2004 Taipei Biennial was approximately N\$20 million (US\$600,000) which was widely criticised within Taiwan's art community as being inadequate. In 2007, the budget was increased to N\$34 million (US\$1 million) in Frazier, 'Taipei Biennial Finds Bearings', *Art Asia Pacific*, 2008, p.77. Also Kendzulak, 'Examining the Highs and Lows', *Taipei Times*, 2004 (online).

¹¹⁵⁹ This exhibition featured four Taiwan artists (Wu Mali, BBrother, Tsui Kuang-yu and Yu Cheng-ta) compared to six artists that were shown on average in previous Taipei Biennials.

¹¹⁶⁰ Frazier, 'Taiwan's Upstart Biennial', *Art Asia Pacific*, 2009, pp.62-63.

¹¹⁶¹ The TFAM displayed works by forty-three of the forty-seven artists.

¹¹⁶² Manray Hsu and Vasif Kortun, 'Curators' Statement', 2008 Taipei Biennial, TFAM, 2008, pp.6-7.

to indigenous housing and environmental sustainability. As part of this biennial the curators invited the Viennese artist/activist Oliver Ressler to develop a mini-exhibition entitled *A World Where Many Worlds Fit* that included twelve artists' work, supplemented by archival material focusing on the rise of counter-globalisation and social resistance movements (fig. 7.3). With an emphasis on front-line activism, this small exhibition captured the spirit of 'anti-globalisation'¹¹⁶³ through the exploration of the role of art, both as a commodity and as an expression of neo-liberal resistance. With its overt political agenda, its unpainted walls and the generally disordered presentation of works, along with the lack of exhibition title and theme, Frazier remarks that this was the most radical Taipei Biennial presented thus far by the TFAM.¹¹⁶⁴

Responding to calls within the visual arts community for greater local and community engagement, the curators of the 2008 biennial commissioned several works that were site-specific and critically engaged in local/global issues. In this exhibition the city of Taipei became a case study for several overseas artists whose commissioned works relied on audience participation and were displayed in different sites across Taipei.¹¹⁶⁵ The curators set out to inspire 'critical dialogue' about issues that were viewed as 'particularly pertinent to Taiwan (but not specific to Taiwan alone)'.¹¹⁶⁶ This was exemplified in Wu Mali's socially-engaged installation, *Taipei Tomorrow as a Lake Again*, which, according to one foreign art critic, was one of the most 'meaningful' works in this exhibition (fig. 7.4). A community-based project, which was situated just outside the museum, the work was literally an organic edible garden that was regularly nurtured by local volunteers. The project

¹¹⁶³ Pollack, 'Taipei Biennial', *Art in America*, 2008, p.104.

¹¹⁶⁴ Frazier, 'Taiwan's Upstart Biennial', *Art Asia Pacific*, 2009, p.63.

¹¹⁶⁵ These five venues included Taipei Art Park, the Taipei Brewery, two MRT stations, and the Taipei Arena. Although some works were difficult to locate in Taipei's visually crowded urban landscape, Lara Almarcegui's (Spain/Netherlands) ecological research project, and Sasō Sedlaček's (Slovenia) 'Beggar Robot' were amongst the most successful site-specific and socially engaged works in this exhibition.

¹¹⁶⁶ Hsu and Kortun, 'Curators' Statement', in 2008 Taipei Biennial, pp.6-7.

sought to raise community awareness about climate change in a local context. Implicitly it criticised the extensive use of pesticides in the Taipei International Flora Expo.¹¹⁶⁷ This large, government-funded horticultural festival, held in the museum's precinct and opened at a similar time to the Taipei Biennial, attracted significant criticism within the visual arts community. Advertised as a cultural event that would 'promote Taiwan to the world', it had a budget that far exceeded that of the Taipei Biennial,¹¹⁶⁸ thus raising questions about the government's priorities and the TFAM's role in this event.¹¹⁶⁹

Notwithstanding these local disputes, the Taipei Biennial continued to expand in scale and scope, both geographically and aesthetically. With its 'sky is the limit' approach, the 2000 Taipei Biennial had established the framework for future exhibitions that increasingly focused on 'the world'. This was exemplified two years later with the 2002 Taipei Biennial, *Great Theatre of the World* (世界劇場).

For this exhibition, curators Wang Jia-ji and Spanish Bartomeu Mari, employed the metaphor the 'world is a stage' to reflect upon the role of digital technology in our media-saturated society and the ways it shapes and defines our

¹¹⁶⁷ For more on this work see Larry Shao, 'Interview with Wu Mali', *Asia Art Archive*, Nov. 2010. http://www.aaa.org.hk/newsletter_detail.aspx?newsletter_id=931 (accessed 16/6/2011).

¹¹⁶⁸ According to the official 2010 Flora Expo website the total budget for this six month expo was NT\$9.51 billion. The overall budget of the Flora Expo was approximately 600 times more than the budget of the Taipei Biennial, Chris Gill, 'Navel Gazing at the Taipei Biennial', *The Art Newspaper*, 28 Sept. 2010. <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Navel-gazing-at-the-Taipei-Biennial/21553> (accessed 9/6/2011). The aims of this horticultural exposition were to raise civic awareness of the environment and create opportunities for community engagement; while seeking to 'promote Taiwan to the world'. <http://www.2010taipeiexpo.tw/ct.asp?xItem=70726&CtNode=6966&mp=4> (accessed 28/6/2011).

¹¹⁶⁹ According to reports, not only did the TFAM reduce the duration of the Taipei Biennial by two weeks to allow for the opening of the Flora Expo, but the museum also purportedly spent approximately SNT140 million (\$US5 million) on building renovations and landscaping to improve public access to areas adjoining the museum and the neighbouring park where the Flora Expo was held to 'enable crowd control'. Larry Shao, 'Turbulence in Cultural Affairs', *Asia Art Archive - Research Log*, Sept. 2011. http://www.aaa.org.hk/newsletter_detail.aspx?newsletter_id=1071 (accessed 7/9/2011).

conceptions of reality. Unlike previous Taipei Biennials, this exhibition focused predominantly on digitally-based art and, according to one local reviewer, inspired a new generation of digital media artists in Taiwan.¹¹⁷⁰ The ubiquity of new media was not exclusive to this exhibition. In the 2004 Taipei Biennial several critics commented upon the predominance of video and film documentaries.¹¹⁷¹ According to Felix Schöeber, the increasing presence of new media in these exhibitions was not only part of the 'aestheticisation' of visual arts discourse in Taiwan but was also, on a symbolic level, a reflection of Taiwan's changing political climate. Schöeber claims that new media increasingly displaced painting, which was associated with nativism, and, he asserts, was the preferred medium of DPP advocates.¹¹⁷² This is a generalisation, and, I would contend that this upsurge of interest in new media was inspired by global art trends and art market forces, rather than by domestic political circumstances.¹¹⁷³ Nevertheless, new media became the most popular medium in the Taipei and Venice biennials during this decade. In Taiwan its popularity can be attributed to at least three key factors: the ubiquity of new media in exhibitions held across the world; the emergence of a new generation of artists in Taiwan; and its accessibility, portability, and flexibility.

Global issues imbued with local significance were also foregrounded in the 2004 Taipei Biennial in which co-curators Amy Cheng and Barbara Vanderlinden from Belgium critically engaged with ideas of 'global citizenship'.

¹¹⁷⁰ Apart from one mixed media installation in this exhibition all local artists produced works in new media, and mainly in the moving image. The artists included Chen Chieh-jen, Kao Chung-li, Wang Ya-hui, Yuan Goang-ming, and Hou Tsung-hui and Lee Tzu-hsun. According to Cheng the work of Yuan Goang-ming was particularly inspiring to younger emerging digital artists in Taiwan. Amy Cheng, 'Emergence of Taiwanese Contemporary Art', *Digital Visions*, (online).

¹¹⁷¹ Ardenne, 'Biennial 2004: Taipei', *Art Press*, 2005 p.72; Gluck, 'Taipei's Artistic Take on Reality', *International Herald Tribune*, 2004(online); Sebastiano Brandolini, 'Taipei Biennial', *Domus* (Milano), vol. 1, 2008, pp.45-47.

¹¹⁷² Schöeber, in *Re-Writing Culture in Taiwan*, 2009, p.175.

¹¹⁷³ DPP advocates also supported members of the *Hantu She* which comprised mostly painters from the 101 and the Taipei Painting groups (discussed in Chapter Four).

Entitled, *Do You Believe in Reality?* (在乎現實嗎?) this exhibition explored the dynamics of global capitalist production, the rise of foreign labour markets, civil rights and the growing urban-rural divide. With a small cohort of twenty-one artists,¹¹⁷⁴ including at least four artist groups, this Taipei Biennial was one of the smallest to date although it was supplemented by a programme of locally-produced documentary films focusing on Taiwan's role in the development of global capitalism and its impact on human lives. In *Dirty Yoga*, the curators of the 2006 Taipei Biennial, Wang Jun-jieh and Dan Cameron, delved into more philosophical issues, deconstructing the 'ideology of binary opposition' prevalent in visual arts discourse in the 1990s.¹¹⁷⁵ As noted, several overseas artists from Taiwan featured in this exhibition, which sought to highlight notions of cultural hybridity and 'between-ness', which, the curators suggested, are concepts that more closely align with the complexities of contemporary existence in this globalised world.

The 2010 Taipei Biennial was another defining moment in the museological representation of Taiwan art. Flouting exhibition conventions, the Western-educated artist, curator and academic Lin Hong-john (林宏璋), who also curated Taiwan's pavilion in the 2007 Venice Biennale, and his co-curator, Tirdad Zolghadr, developed a biennial that did not have a curatorial title or rationale, beyond being a critique of the concept of the biennial *per se* and, less explicitly, of the TFAM. The exhibition responded to global debates about the 'biennialisation of contemporary art' world-wide,¹¹⁷⁶ which had emerged as a

¹¹⁷⁴ The six artists from Taiwan represented in this exhibition included Chen Chieh-jen, Tsui Kuang-yu, Kuo I-chen, Yeh Wei Li and Liu Ho-jang and Lin Hong-john.

¹¹⁷⁵ Wang Jun-jieh, 'Institial Space and Thinking – the Way to Thirduotopia', (sic) *Taipei Biennial-Dirty Yoga*, TFAM, Taipei, 2006, pp.40-47.

¹¹⁷⁶ The Taipei Biennial co-curators, Lin and Zolghadr, acknowledged their historical precedents, including Okwui Enwezor's *Platforms* exhibition in the 2002 *Documenta* and the 2003 Venice Biennale's *Utopia Station*; and there were more recent examples including the 2008 Sao Paulo exhibition, and in Cyprus, the Pan-European biennial Manifesta, see David Frazier, 'Taipei Anti-Biennial', *Art in America*, vol.98, no.10, Nov. 2010. <http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-opinion/news/2010-11-19/taipeis-anti-biennial/> (accessed 2/4/2011).

popular topic in the 2005 Venice Biennale,¹¹⁷⁷ and also, later, in the 2010 Shanghai Biennial.¹¹⁷⁸ Opening a month after the Taipei Biennial, the 2010 Shanghai Biennial employed the metaphor of the 'rehearsal studio' to re-evaluate and re-define the concept of the exhibition and the role contemporary art plays in Chinese society.¹¹⁷⁹ In Taipei's untitled biennial, Lin and Zolghadr set out to develop an 'anti-biennial biennial'¹¹⁸⁰ that would interrogate systems of representation underpinning the selection and display of art.¹¹⁸¹ Based on the premise that a museum or exhibition is never beyond critique, the curators sought to 'lay bare the chronological, institutional, formal and social contexts of the exhibition' and dissolve 'the supposed boundaries between artistic and curatorial practices, discourses and reception'.¹¹⁸² Comparing it to the previous Taipei Biennial, which focused on anti-globalisation and social resistance movements, Lin Hong-john stresses that the 2010 exhibition explored the 'politics of art' rather than politics *per se*.¹¹⁸³

Significantly, this exhibition developed during a period of transition within the TFAM where a new Director was yet to be appointed, and when the TFAM's exhibition policies and professional integrity had come under intense public scrutiny. As well as the ongoing furore over the TFAM's role in the government-sponsored Flora Expo, the local visual arts community accused

¹¹⁷⁷ Frieze magazine, 'Venice Biennale 2005', issue 93, Sept. 2005.

¹¹⁷⁸ http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/venice_biennale_2005/ (accessed 25/8/2011)

¹¹⁷⁹ In the 2010 Shanghai Biennial the curators, all of whom were this time Chinese, employed the metaphor of the 'rehearsal studio' to explore the exhibition as an experimental, performative and reflective space within which the creative processes of artistic production and display were re-examined. The exhibition included several works-in-progress, and a creative laboratory was developed as local and international 'influential thinkers' were brought together to re-consider and debate the role of contemporary art. Xingyu Chen (sic), 'Reassessing the Shanghai Biennial', *New York Times - Arts*, 15 Nov. 2010.

¹¹⁸⁰ <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/16/arts/16iht-rartshanghai.html> (accessed 5/8/2011).

¹¹⁷⁹ The Taipei Biennial was open from 7 Sept-14 Nov. 2010, and the Shanghai Biennial opened 24 Oct. 2010-23 Jan. 2011 – after the Shanghai World Expo.

¹¹⁸⁰ Frazier, 'Taipei Anti-Biennial', *Art in America*, 2010, (online).

¹¹⁸¹ 2010 Taipei Biennial Statement, TFAM website.

¹¹⁸² http://www.taipeibiennial.org/web_TB_2010/en/index.html (accessed 6/6/2011).

¹¹⁸³ 2010 Taipei Biennial Statement, TFAM (online).

¹¹⁸³ Gill, 'Navel Gazing', *The Art Newspaper*, 2010 (online).

the museum, along with other museums in Taiwan,¹¹⁸⁴ of neglecting local artists¹¹⁸⁵ in favour of international blockbuster exhibitions that attracted sponsorship and brought kudos to the museum.¹¹⁸⁶ Moreover, Hsieh Hsiao-yun, the former TFAM Director¹¹⁸⁷ and head of the city government's Cultural Affairs Department, also came under attack for her involvement in these commercial exhibition enterprises.¹¹⁸⁸ Local artists became increasingly emboldened, voicing their criticisms in the media. During a widely-publicised press conference for his own survey exhibition at the TFAM,¹¹⁸⁹ the by now internationally-acclaimed artist, Chen Chieh-jen, declared the museum had become 'thoroughly box-office oriented and commercialised' and no longer

¹¹⁸⁴ According to one report, from 1993 to 2008, there was an average of four to six international blockbuster exhibitions held annually by public art museums. Between 2009 and 2011 this number increased significantly to approximately sixteen exhibitions. Wu, Ouch (sic), 台灣特展檔案 ('Taiwan Exhibition Files'), *Art Co. Monthly*, cited in Shao, 'Turbulence in Cultural Affairs', *Asia Art Archive*, (online).

¹¹⁸⁵ While the TFAM acknowledges the number of local exhibitions had declined in number, it claims it did so to ensure optimal resources were made available for these exhibitions. From the late 1980s to the late 1990s, the TFAM held approximately twenty exhibitions each year; and by 2003 this number dropped to five. TFAM, 'Lively and Dynamic Solo Exhibitions in a Wave of Postmodernism', in *Taipei Fine Arts Museum*, TFAM, 2010, pp.32-33.

¹¹⁸⁶ These exhibitions in 2010 included *Manet to Picasso: Masterpieces from the Philadelphia Museum of Art* (June 2010), an exhibition of Paul Gauguin's work (Nov. 2010) and a collaborative exhibition by Jean-Paul Gaultier and French choreographer Régine Chopinot (Aug. 2010). The TFAM's practice of outsourcing exhibitions has come under criticism partly because one of the private exhibition agencies the TFAM uses which allegedly employs the daughter of the Taipei city government's Director of Cultural Affairs, Lee Yong-ping (李永萍).

<http://www.libertytimes.com.tw/2010/new/dec/28/today-art1.htm>;

<http://artreport.artemperor.tw/reports/36>;

<http://n.yam.com/msnews/mkarticle.php?article=20100915011338> (accessed 24/3/2011).

¹¹⁸⁷ Hsieh's successor as Wu Kuang-ting (吳光庭) appointed director in Sept. 2010. Previously, Wu was a Professor in Architecture. According to reports, during his term as TFAM Director, there was considerable tension relating to the TFAM's exhibition programming and both Hsieh, who was then in the Cultural Affairs Bureau, and Wu resigned in July 2011. Shao, 'Turbulence in Cultural Affairs', *Asia Art Archive*, (online); also see Kelly Her, 'A Gateway to Art', Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in New York.

<http://www.taiwanembassy.org/us/nyc/ct.asp?xitem=139331&ctNode=3483&mp=62c> (accessed 6/8/2011).

¹¹⁸⁸ It was alleged that Hsieh was colluding with one of the private companies involved in promoting these exhibitions and although the Department of Government Ethics investigated and found her innocent. Hsieh subsequently resigned due to ongoing pressure from the visual arts community. Shao, 'Interview with Wu Mali', *Asia Art Archive*, 2010 (online).

¹¹⁸⁹ Chen's survey exhibition was entitled *On the Empire's Borders Chen Chieh-jen 1996-2010* (在帝國的邊界上), (Aug. 2010).

represented the local arts community.¹¹⁹⁰ Chen's comments echoed those made only months earlier by the artist, Tsong Pu (莊普) whose exhibition, *Art from the Underground* (*Dixia yishu* 地下藝術) (May 2010) pointedly commented on the way local artists are consigned to the TFAM's basement floor because, he suggests, they are perceived not to be commercially viable. With a hint of irony, this senior, internationally recognised and widely respected artist and art educator states,

My first exhibit was held in this space twenty years ago. It seems that I haven't improved much over that time because twenty years later I'm still...underground. Hopefully my work will improve in the future so that I can be elevated to the first floor.¹¹⁹¹

The TFAM's perceived commercialisation and marginalisation of local artists remain ongoing contentious issues. The situation has also been exacerbated by the TFAM's new annual quota of Chinese art, which stipulates that the museum must present a certain number of exhibitions from China annually (see Chapter Eight). As a post-script to the argument of this thesis, it is relevant to note that these tensions between the TFAM and the local art community have intensified significantly after the TFAM's announcement of artists chosen to represent Taiwan in the forthcoming 2013 Venice Biennale. Of these three artists, selected by the independent curator Lu Dai-ru, only one resides in Taiwan (Hsu Chia-wei); another is from Taiwan but is based in Germany (and has adopted a German name, Bernd Behr); and, most controversially, the third is a Czech artist (Katerina Seda) who is the first foreign artist to represent

¹¹⁹⁰ Chen also states that while he supports international exchanges, including cross-strait exchanges, he opposes the 'neo-liberalist' exchanges which he defines as blockbusters, such as the Pixar exhibition and the Manet to Picasso touring exhibition which do not generate dialogue and are commercially driven. Frazier, 'Taipei Anti-Biennial', *Art in America*, 2010 (online); Noah Buchan, 'Bucking the Trend', *Taipei Times*, 29 Dec. 2010, p.15. See <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/feat/archives/2010/12/29/2003492128> (accessed 6/6/2011). For the full article see Noah Buchan, 'History Repeating Itself', http://www.itpark.com.tw/artist/critical_data/10/968/73 (accessed 20/6/2011).

¹¹⁹¹ Noah Buchan, 'Stirring it Up', *Taipei Times*, 26 May 2010, p.15. <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/feat/archives/2010/05/26/2003473888> (accessed 7/6/2011).

Taiwan.¹¹⁹² In an exhibition based on national representation, the selection of this latter artist is indeed strange, and incongruous with the TFAM's policy to promote Taiwan art.

These issues have provoked significant concern within the local arts community¹¹⁹³ and public protests calling for government intervention and a revision of cultural policy have been staged outside the museum.¹¹⁹⁴ After decades of being the sole authoritative voice and the premier museum for contemporary art in Taiwan, the agency and professionalism of the TFAM is now being cross-examined by the local arts community, members of which are increasingly pursuing exhibitions opportunities overseas.

In the 2010 Taipei Biennial several artists' works that were commissioned for this exhibition focused on the politics and practices of museums. These works included Christian Jankowski's *Director's Cut* (2010), which developed during the 'difficult interregnum' between directors at the TFAM. This piece satirizes recruitment procedures in the arts, which, according to the TFAM website, 'are usually obscure and often deeply political'.¹¹⁹⁵ Other works included Cary Young's *Conflict Management Arbitration Office*. Situated in a local market

¹¹⁹² This controversy has received extensive coverage in Taiwan's Chinese-language press. See for example, Ling, Mei-xue (凌美雪), 黃海鳴閃爍其詞終拍板 重新評審免談 ('Huang Hai-ming Avoiding Discussing the Judging'), 自由時報 (*Liberty Times*), 28 Nov. 2012.

<http://www.libertytimes.com.tw/2012/new/nov/28/today-art1.htm>; Wu, Yin-hui (吳垠慧), 威尼斯雙年展 台灣館爭議 藝術家籲重審 批北美館打太極 ('Venice Biennale - Controversy Over the Approval of Artists at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum'), 中國時報 (*China Times*), 28 Nov. 2012. <http://news.chinatimes.com/reading/110513/112012112800504.html> (accessed 29/11/2012).

¹¹⁹³ David Frazier, 'Plight at the Museum', *Taipei Times*, 17 Jan. 2010, p.13.

<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/feat/archives/2010/01/17/2003463696/3> (accessed 8/6/2011); Larry Shao, 'New Forms of Sponsorship', *Asia Art Archive* (Research Log), May 2010. http://www.aaa.org.hk/newsletter_detail.aspx?newsletter_id=833 (accessed 28/6/2011)

¹¹⁹⁴ For an outline of the criticisms directed at the TFAM by the local arts community.

<http://culturalmultitudeunited.blogspot.com/> (in Chinese) (accessed 5/10/2012).

¹¹⁹⁵ As part of this participatory-based work Jankowski simulates an interview with potential candidates on video that was shown in the director's office during the opening of the exhibition. http://www.taipeibiennial.org/web_TB_2010/en/artist.html (accessed 7/6/2011); Gill, 'Navel Gazing', *The Art Newspaper*, 2010, (online).

place, it offered passers-by a free arbitration service that had been advertised in the local media.¹¹⁹⁶ Responding to the museum's mission to increase audience numbers, the Taiwan-born Paris-based artist Jao Chia-en (饒加恩), one of five local artists in this exhibition,¹¹⁹⁷ suggested opening the TFAM only at night during its final week, when the neighbouring Flora Expo was closed, to attract the public to the museum. Entitled *Nocturnal Biennial*, the artist's proposal was, not surprisingly, vetoed by the TFAM. In Shahab Fotouhi's commissioned video work, the artist set up an interview, on a television chat show, between the co-curator Tirdad and local government officials to discuss cultural policy. However, according to one local art reviewer, the project 'did not pose the harsh questions the moment perhaps demanded'¹¹⁹⁸ as some of the key concerns regarding cultural policy were not raised.

Seeking to avoid the spectacular and sprawling displays characteristic of many international biennials, the curators selected only twenty-four artists. A number of these artists had participated in the 2008 Taipei Biennial¹¹⁹⁹ and were now commissioned to develop new works that expanded on ideas previously explored. As a 'work-in-progress',¹²⁰⁰ the curators intended that these commissioned artists' projects would evolve over time and be presented as part of, or just prior to, the subsequent 2012 Taipei Biennial. It should be noted that, unlike earlier Taipei Biennials, no artists from Mainland China featured in this exhibition.¹²⁰¹ Whether this was a pragmatic decision based on

¹¹⁹⁶ Another work included Olivia Plender's 'Google Office' in which the artist created a multifunctional space where international and local art figures could have a conversation which were scheduled daily. Frazier, 'Taipei Anti-Biennial', *Art in America*, 2010, (online).

¹¹⁹⁷ The remaining four local artists included: Wang Ya-hui, Larry Shao, Shih Tin-hua, Yeh Wei-li.

¹¹⁹⁸ Frazier, 'Taipei Anti-Biennial', *Art in America*, 2010, (online). Also see Buchan, 'Bucking the Trend', *Taipei Times*, 2010, (online).

¹¹⁹⁹ These artists were from overseas and included Lara Almarcegui, Burak Delier, Irwin, and Superflex

¹²⁰⁰ TFAM, Taipei Biennial 2010, (online).

¹²⁰¹ Apart from two artists, Pak Sheung Chuen and Wong Wai-yin from Hong Kong, there were no artists from China included in the 2010 Taipei Biennial.

the scope and size of the exhibition or, in fact, a reaction to criticisms regarding the TFAM's Chinese quota system, is a matter of conjecture.

With the rise of global mobility and the free-flow of information, markets, ideas, and images, globalisation, as Featherstone observes, 'makes us aware of the sheer volume, diversity and many-sidedness of culture.'¹²⁰² As these consecutive editions of the Taipei Biennial attest, during the course of this decade, the TFAM became increasingly conscious of and open to pluralistic forms of curatorial and artistic production promoted in global art discourse. In accordance with cultural policy objectives, and global art trends, the TFAM adopted a local-global curatorial paradigm designed to promote cross-cultural dialogue and exchange. Under this paradigm, nationalist discourses on identity, based on native-foreign and centre-periphery cultural binaries, were displaced by transcultural collaborative forms of artistic production. With its 'sky is the limit' approach, the first co-curated Taipei Biennial in 2000 opened up visual arts discourse and inspired significant artistic experimentation. It laid the foundations for subsequent biennials of Taiwan art held in Taipei and also, during alternate years, in Venice.

Venice Biennale (2001-2009)

The Venice Biennale is popularly described as the 'Olympics of art' and, since 1995 when Taiwan first officially participated in this global cultural event, it has provided a vital platform for Taiwan to promote itself to the world. According to the TFAM, 'Taiwan's participation in the Venice Biennale is highly meaningful [and] has substantially contributed to the island's international cultural exchanges, and won considerable international goodwill.'¹²⁰³ Operating under new cultural policy objectives, during this decade the TFAM sought to project an image of Taiwan to international audiences that was both

¹²⁰² Featherstone, *Undoing Culture*, 1995, p.14.

¹²⁰³ TFAM, Press Release, '52 International Art Exhibition' (La Biennale di Venezia), The Exhibition of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum of Taiwan', 2007. <http://universes-in-universe.de/car/venezia/eng/2007/tour/twn/press-01.pdf> (accessed 4/9/2011).

local and global. As the principal organising body, the TFAM retained curatorial jurisdiction over both the Taipei and Venice biennials.¹²⁰⁴ As such, it is not surprising that both events have shared a similar curatorial vision of integrating Taiwan more fully in the global cultural sphere. The review of these four exhibitions examines the key curatorial themes in relation to the broader narrative on the re-envisioning of Taiwan's identity.

To a greater extent, the Taipei Biennial was regarded a benchmark for the Venice Biennale, a means by which the TFAM could test new ideas, curatorial strategies, and gauge audience reception to local artists' works. As evidence of this, at least two curators,¹²⁰⁵ and several local artists including, Michael Lin, Lee Mingwei, Shu Lea Cheang, Chen Chieh-jen, as well as Kuo I-chen (郭奕臣) who participated in the Taipei Biennial and who attracted increasing international attention, were re-selected to represent Taiwan at the Venice Biennale.¹²⁰⁶ Furthermore, the curatorial penchant for interdisciplinary and interactive works, and particularly for digital media, which had been manifest in the Taipei Biennial, was also embraced by curators of the Venice Biennale. As one curator remarks, 'installation, photography and video [...] became the favoured media of Taiwanese art at Venice' as they reflected a 'contemporary look'. 'Two dimensional works' were 'confined to the Ice Age' and, after 1997, oil painting no longer featured in these exhibitions.¹²⁰⁷

¹²⁰⁴ While the exhibition curators from Taiwan were chosen by selection committees, the TFAM appointed these committees which were also chaired by the TFAM Director, Huang Tsai-lang.

¹²⁰⁵ These curators included Wang Jia-ji (who curated the Taipei Biennial in 2002 and the 2005 Venice Biennale), Amy Cheng (who curated the 2004 Taipei Biennial and the 2011 Venice Biennale), and Lin Hong-john (who participated as an artist in the Taipei Biennial in 2004 and was then chosen to curate the Venice Biennale in 2007 and the 2010 Taipei Biennial). Lin Shumin participated first in the Venice Biennale as an artist in 2001 and was then chosen as a curator of the Taiwan venue in 2003.

¹²⁰⁶ In addition artists who had participated in both biennials included Yuan Goang-ming, Kao Chung-li and VIVA.

¹²⁰⁷ Kao Chien-hui, 'Fourteen Years at the Bridge of Sighs: An Organic History of Taiwan's Visual Texts – the Venice Version, 1995-2007', in *Taiwan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale-A Retrospective 1996-2007*, TFAM, 2010, p.54. This reference to oil painting related to works by Lee Ming-tse which featured in the Taiwan pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1997. It must be

Curatorially, exhibition titles and themes were equally, if not more, globally oriented, as the appointed curators focused on 'common humanistic concerns',¹²⁰⁸ including concepts of freedom, reality and place. Although Taiwan's national identity status, or lack thereof, was addressed in two exhibitions, importantly they did not seek to re-invent or resurrect the Taiwanese nationalist or Pan-Asian identity narratives underpinning *Taiwan Taiwan* (1997) and *Close to Open* (1999) (see Chapters One and Two). While localism remained an important trope in exhibitions of Taiwan art at Venice, as Kao Chien-hui (高千惠) the curator of the 2001 exhibition observes, nationalist concerns and cultural symbols and icons imbued with local cultural significance were less visible, or nonexistent, during this period.¹²⁰⁹ Unlike her predecessor, the Taiwan-based curator JJ Shih (石瑞仁) who curated *Close to Open: Taiwanese Artists Exposed* (1999), Kao Chien-hui (a Chicago-based independent curator and writer), had long advocated a cosmopolitan rather than a nativist view of art.¹²¹⁰ In her exhibition, entitled *The Living Cell: Soul Factory of Mankind* (活性因子: 人的精神工坊) (2001), Kao distanced herself from concepts of nationhood and cultural difference, and symbolically, for the first time, the word 'Taiwan' was absent from the exhibition's title.

In *The Living Cell* Kao sought, in essence, to evoke 'the spirit of sharing across cultures'.¹²¹¹ Situating Taiwan art within a transnational paradigm, she explored, through five Taiwan artists' works,¹²¹² the processes of cross-

noted that Michael Lin produced a painting for the 2001 Venice Biennale but as an installation work.

¹²⁰⁸ Kao Chien-hui, 'Living Cell: Soul Factory of Mankind', in *Taiwan Pavilion*, 2010, p.214.

¹²⁰⁹ Kao Chien-hui, 'Fourteen Years', in *Taiwan Pavilion*, 2010, pp.55-56, 61.

¹²¹⁰ This was evident in Kao's essay 圓桌武士大風吹-從世界櫺窗看台灣新藝術 ('Knights of the Round Table Blow Up a Storm: Looking Through the World's Window at Taiwan Art') in *Taiwan Consciousness in Taiwan Art*, 1994, pp. 224-237 (in Chinese). Also see her book 在藝術界河上: 當代藝術思路之旅 (*Between the Boundaries: A Journey to Contemporary Art*), 藝術家出版社 (Artist Publishing) Taipei, 2001 (in Chinese).

¹²¹¹ Kao Chien-hui, 'Living Cell', in *Taiwan Pavilion-A Retrospective*, 2010, pp.212-217.

¹²¹² The five participating artists in this exhibition included Michael Lin, Wang Wen-chih, Chang Chien-chi, Lin Shumin and Liu Shih-fen.

cultural fertilisation - how people, ideas, beliefs and cultures across the world interact, compete, adapt and ultimately mutate into new forms. Kao employed Richard Dawkins' 'meme' evolutionary theory¹²¹³ as a metaphor to describe how Taiwan's 'cultural genes'¹²¹⁴ have been influenced, re-configured and re-defined through these processes of cultural transmission. Focusing on the temporal and spatial dimensions of cultural identity formation, she identified three 'waves' in the past decade's development of Taiwan art, from Taiwanese nativism to globalisation. This exhibition focused on the 'third wave [of] cultural diversification',¹²¹⁵ and these five artists' works were perceived as exemplifying the processes of cross-cultural fertilisation.¹²¹⁶ An installation by the aforementioned artist Michael Lin, a 2000 Taipei Biennial participant, was contextualised within this cross-cultural framework.¹²¹⁷ Lin's floral wall paintings, pointedly identified by the curator as deriving from Chinese and Japanese traditional domestic patterns, are considered emblematic of the ways artists in Taiwan are appropriating and adapting different cultural traditions and practices to explore 'broader cultural issues that transcend regional boundaries'.¹²¹⁸ This emphasis on cultural transmission and on the pluralistic aspects of Taiwan art marked a significant departure from previous national exhibitions at Venice, and called attention to notions of cultural distinctiveness and authenticity.

While *The Living Cell* explored the globalising processes of cultural dissemination, reproduction and hybridity, *The Spectre of Freedom* (自由的幻象), which opened in 2005, focused on the spread of global capitalism, people and conflict in this new era (fig. 7.5). Curated by Wang Jia-ji (also the curator of the 2002 Taipei Biennial), the exhibition was the first that

¹²¹³ Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1976.

¹²¹⁴ Kao Chien-hui, 'Living Cell', in *Taiwan Pavilion*, 2010, p.213.

¹²¹⁵ Kao Chien-hui, 'Living Cell', in *Taiwan Pavilion*, 2010, pp. 212-213.

¹²¹⁶ Kao Chien-hui, 'Living Cell', in *Taiwan Pavilion*, 2010, p.212.

¹²¹⁷ Kao Chien-hui, 'Living Cell', in *Taiwan Pavilion*, 2010, pp.216, 212, 214.

¹²¹⁸ Kao Chien-hui, 'Fourteen Years', in *Taiwan Pavilion*, 2010, p.55, 'Living Cell', in *Taiwan Pavilion*, 2010, pp.215-216.

exclusively displayed works in digital media, predominantly by Taiwan's younger generation of artists. Encompassing video, animation, and interactive performance/internet-based art, it featured works by four artists including Kao Chung-li (高重黎), Kuo I-chen and Tsui Kuang-yu, who had previously participated in the Taipei Biennial in 2002 and 2004; as well as Lin Hsin-yi (林欣怡). The significance of the location of this exhibition, a former Italian prison (*prigioni*), added a poignancy to the thematic of this exhibition that was not lost on audiences.¹²¹⁹ Inspired by a Luis Buñuel film¹²²⁰ and by Jean Baudillard's thesis on 'An end to freedom',¹²²¹ the exhibition engaged with contemporary issues that centred on the meaning of freedom in the global era. Opening in the wake of the September 11 attacks in 2001, and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the exhibition was imbued with global and local significance. While focusing on issues of global conflict and terrorism, *The Spectre of Freedom* was also unequivocally a commentary on Taiwan-China relations, and on China's anti-secession law.¹²²² This law ratified the Chinese government's longstanding policy that it would employ 'non-peaceful means' if Taiwan pursued independence. Given that, less than a decade previously, China had fired missiles across the Taiwan Strait, it is not surprising this law generated considerable discussion in Taiwan whose freedom, as the curator states, 'may become nothing but a spectre',¹²²³

¹²¹⁹ Susan Kendzulak, 'Chinese Artists at the 51st Venice Biennale', *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, vol. 4, no. 3, Sept. 2005, pp.8-9. Also see in the same issue a review on the exhibition by Felix Schöeber, 'China's Spectacular *Emersion* Versus the Spectres of Bureaucracy Looming in Taiwan, the Singaporean Art of Deconstructing National Symbols, Wordless Dialogue from Hong Kong or Greater China at the 2005 Venice Biennale', *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, vol. 4, no. 3, Sept. 2005, pp.27-35.

¹²²⁰ This film made in 1974 by the Spanish director Bunuel, who was the founder of surrealist cinema, was originally titled in French 'Le Fantôme de la Liberté,' (in English 'The Phantom of Liberty').

¹²²¹ Jean Baudrillard, 'An End to Freedom,' *Impossible Exchange*, Chris Turner (trans.), Verso, London, 2001, pp. 51-57.

¹²²² The Chinese government's anti-secession law (反分裂國家法) was passed by the PRC's National People's Congress in March 2005 and formalised the Chinese government's policy on cross-strait relations and confirmed it would use force against Taiwan if the DPP pursued independence.

¹²²³ Wang Jia-ji, 'The Spectre of Freedom', in *Taiwan Pavilion*, 2010, p.258.

In the exhibition, a work entitled *Invade the Prigioni* by the young artist Kuo I-chen¹²²⁴ engaged directly with these ideas of freedom and conflict in local and global contexts (fig. 7.6). In essence, the work is a four-channel audio-visual video installation comprising a moving projection of a large shadow of an aeroplane that is sensor-driven and intermittently crosses the ceiling of the exhibition space. The moving shadow is accompanied by a low rumbling roar characteristic of aeroplane turbines.¹²²⁵ Shown initially in the 2004 Taipei Biennial, this installation was originally conceived of as a site-specific intervention created for the TFAM, which is located directly under the flight path of Taipei's domestic airport. In Taipei, this work was viewed as a witty incursion on the museum, challenging perceptions of the museum as 'an independent realm, completely partitioned off from the outside world.'¹²²⁶ However, once removed from its local context, and inserted into this global cultural sphere it was re-interpreted as a commentary on global issues relating to the 'War on Terror' and Taiwan-China relations. Wang states, 'Since the 9/11 incident, the airplane has become a nightmarish image, threatening the concept of freedom. It has been transformed into an obscure, shadowy, spectral, ghostly, illusory concept.'¹²²⁷ The re-positioning and re-framing of this artwork, from a local into a global context, raises complex questions regarding the power and agency of the curator and artist, and highlights the transnational vision that the organisers were seeking to convey to international audiences at the Venice Biennale.

In contrast to such representations that were located within a local-global geopolitical context, in 2003 and 2007 *Limbo Zone* and *Atopia* explored the unfixed 'borderlands'¹²²⁸ between the conscious and subconscious, place and space. As their titles reflect, these exhibitions broadly examined the concept of

¹²²⁴ Kuo I-Chen was the youngest artist who had so far represented Taiwan at the Venice Biennale.

¹²²⁵ In the Taipei Biennial, this work was entitled *Invade the TFAM*.

¹²²⁶ Amy Cheng, in *Taipei Biennial-Do You Believe in Reality*, TFAM, Taipei, p.109.

¹²²⁷ Wang Jia-ji, 'The Spectre of Freedom', in *Taiwan Pavilion*, 2010, p.262.

¹²²⁸ Lin Shumin, 'Limbo Zone', in *Taiwan Pavilion*, 2010, p.234.

'in-between' spaces (or what Bhabha refers to as 'a space-in-between'), which are hybrid and indeterminate spaces fixed neither in time nor place.¹²²⁹ The interface between real and virtual worlds was explored in *Limbo Zone* (心感地帶) (2003), curated by the US-based artist and curator Lin Shumin, who had been a participating artist in Taiwan's 2001 exhibition in Venice, *The Living Cell*. This exhibition focused primarily on the impact of digital and biotechnologies and their power to transcend geocultural and political boundaries, and penetrate our 'psychic space'.¹²³⁰ Of the four artists whose works featured in this exhibition,¹²³¹ three lived overseas. ¹²³² It is also noteworthy that the vast majority of the artists in this exhibition had previously participated in the Taipei Biennial.¹²³³ According to the curator, their works represent 'the state of flux' and the 'transformation taking place throughout the world'.¹²³⁴ This state of transition is defined not in geopolitical or cultural terms but rather as a psychological state of being - between consciousness and subconsciousness - which, the curator emphasises, is a universal condition: 'a space of the mind [...] [that is] unique to modern people'.¹²³⁵

A work in this exhibition that best exemplifies Lin's curatorial concept was by the New York-based artist, Lee Mingwei, who had been involved in the 2000 Taipei Biennial. For this exhibition Lee presented *The Sleeping Project*. Comprising two Chinese antique beds, the artist and different members of the audience 'resided' in this work, which was effectively activated through observation and conversation. Selected volunteers from the audience were invited to join the artist in this space for one night, bringing with them a favourite object of their choice that would remain and become part the

¹²²⁹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London, 1994.

¹²³⁰ Lin Shumin, 'Limbo Zone', in *Taiwan Pavilion*, 2010, p.234.

¹²³¹ These artists included Lee Mingwei, Daniel Lee, Shu Lea Cheang, and Yuan Goang-ming

¹²³² The only artist that lived in Taiwan was Yuan Goang-ming.

¹²³³ Shu Lea Cheang, Lee Mingwei and Yuan Goang-ming.

¹²³⁴ Lin Shumin, 'Limbo Zone', in *Taiwan Pavilion*, 2010, p.234.

¹²³⁵ Lin Shumin, 'Limbo Zone', in *Taiwan Pavilion*, 2010, p.234.

exhibition. This work was contextualised in relation to Freudian theories on the subconscious, and explored the interface between the conscious and subconscious, public and private, and between real and fantasy worlds, which transcend geopolitical and cultural borders.

In *Atopia* (非成之境) (2007), the aforementioned Lin Hong-john, selected five artists,¹²³⁶ working in a wide range of media, to examine notions of place, or more specifically 'non-place', defined as 'atopia'. In his theoretically dense catalogue essay, Lin adopts Helmut Wilke's concept of atopia, Foucault's heterotopic spaces, and Lacanian psychoanalysis, to explain that atopia is 'a place that cannot be placed, or simply "not-a-place"'.¹²³⁷ In the context of this exhibition, atopia becomes a metaphor for the de-territorialising effects of globalisation and also for Taiwan's non-national or 'phantom status'.¹²³⁸ In his essay, Lin highlights the dual dimensions of atopia as a borderless, transnational and heterogeneous space that can also be marginal and 'un-representable'.¹²³⁹ He remarks, 'The disappearance of boundaries - the mixing and merging of cultures [...] - does not assure necessarily individual freedom'.¹²⁴⁰ The paradoxical aspects of atopia are viewed by Lin as analogous to Taiwan's 'double status': as 'a self-sufficient nation-state' but also, in China's eyes, a 'renegade province' not officially recognised by most of the international community.¹²⁴¹ Lin states, 'One can envisage that Taiwan is a non-national nation, or a nation without nationality, yet is neither post-national nor pre-national: in short, an atopian nation *par excellence*'.¹²⁴²

¹²³⁶ These artists include Tsai Ming-liang (蔡明亮), Lee Kuo-min (李國民), Tang Huang-chen (湯皇珍), Huang Shih-chieh (黃世傑) and VIVA.

¹²³⁷ Hongjohn Lin (Lin Hong-john), 'Atopia', in *Taiwan Pavilion*, 2010, p.280.

¹²³⁸ Hongjohn Lin (Lin Hong-john), 'Atopia', in *Taiwan Pavilion*, 2010, p.282.

¹²³⁹ Hongjohn Lin (Lin Hong-john), 'Atopia', in *Taiwan Pavilion*, 2010, p.280.

¹²⁴⁰ TFAM, Press Release, '52 International Art Exhibition', 2007, (online).

¹²⁴¹ Hongjohn Lin (Lin Hong-john), 'Atopia', in *Taiwan Pavilion*, 2010, p.282.

¹²⁴² TFAM, Press Release, '52 International Art Exhibition', 2007, (online).

While these issues concerning Taiwan's non-nation status are explicitly addressed in Lin's catalogue essay, they were more subtly explored in the exhibition, which focused on themes relating to displacement, alienation and memory and the effects of urbanisation, technology and mobility on human existence. Essentialist notions of national and cultural difference are played down as Lin highlights the hybrid, unfixed and inter-subjective dimensions of atopia, which is described as local and global, real and imaginary. As a reflection of Lin's open-ended curatorial approach, artists' works were mostly interdisciplinary encompassing filmmaking, documentary photography, comic books, and everyday found materials. Tang Huang-chen (湯皇珍) was the only established artist based in Taiwan and working exclusively in the visual arts. For this exhibition she created an audio-visual work installation entitled *Go Travelling/ A Postcard with Scenery* (2003-7). Tang appropriated a widely reproduced tourist postcard image, which she 're-invented' during her travels in Taiwan, France, Korea and Italy. With the assistance of several local participants/actors, Tang re-enacted the scene in the photograph through interactive performative processes. By re-inserting this historical photograph from Taiwan into a contemporary transcultural moving image, the artist effectively blurs the boundaries between time and place, which were the central issues in this exhibition.

Significantly, the 2009 exhibition, *Foreign Affairs* (外交), also examined issues concerning Taiwan's 'non-national' status,¹²⁴³ but this time it was explored within the context of global citizenship and the interrelational aspects of identity formation (fig. 7.7). Under the overarching title *Making Worlds*, which was the theme of that year's Venice Biennale, this exhibition curated by Chang Fang-wei (張芳薇), from the TFAM, focused on the ways Taiwan's artists

¹²⁴³ Chang draws on Lin Hong-john's reference made in the former biennale catalogue that Taiwan was a 'non-national nation, or a nation without nationality', Chang Fang-wei, 'Foreign Affairs from Within: Dialogism of I-for-the-Other', *Foreign Affairs: Artists from Taiwan*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 2009, p.12.

strategically negotiate Taiwan's problematic diplomatic status, pursuing alternative means of communication and interaction. As the exhibition publicity states,

For a long time the Taiwanese people have been locked in a difficult political conundrum in terms of foreign affairs, and have developed their own means of reaction and response, both individually and collectively...The selection of works explores the practical stage of cross-regional art in the context of the operative logic of contemporary global politics, economics and society; alternative possibilities for communicative interaction; and also the question of Taiwan's status and identity.¹²⁴⁴

During an interview, Chang Fang-wei who, notably, was the first curator from the TFAM entrusted with the responsibility of curating an exhibition at the Venice Biennale,¹²⁴⁵ explained that this exhibition was inspired by the landmark 1996 Taipei Biennial, *Quest for Identity* (see Chapter One). Whereas this former exhibition examined notions of subjectivity and identity within a Taiwanese ethno-cultural nationalist context, *Foreign Affairs* explored, on a global level, identity formation through artists' global, intercultural transactions. Chang observes that Taiwan's 'poor political relations in the world' have had a significant impact on artists and, hence, in this exhibition she explores the ways some of these artists are breaking out of this geopolitical impasse and individually forging their own paths in the world.¹²⁴⁶ The exhibition title, she adds, was intended to reflect these political and cultural concerns, and the ways artists were negotiating and overcoming these impediments.¹²⁴⁷

¹²⁴⁴ TFAM, 'Foreign Affairs: Artists from Taiwan', press release, 2009. http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/bien/venice_biennale/2009/tour/taiwan/press_release (accessed 13/9/2012).

¹²⁴⁵ According to Chang (who has been appointed director of the TFAM's 'Biennial and International Projects Office' established in 2008), the TFAM invited her to curate this biennale after the poor quality and number of submissions received from other local curators for the 2007 Venice Biennale. The TFAM's appointment of Chang as the curator of this exhibition was controversial within the art community, partly because Chang says the TFAM did not publicly announce it until later when candidates had already developed their submissions. Chang Fang-wei, Interview with the Author, 2009, Taipei. This issue was also raised by JJ Shih, in my interview with him. JJ, Shih, Interview with the Author, Taipei, 2009.

¹²⁴⁶ Chang, 'Foreign Affairs from Within', in *Foreign Affairs*, 2009, pp.10-16.

¹²⁴⁷ Chang Fang-wei, Interview with the Author, Taipei, 2009.

As the exhibition publicity points out, it is important to note that beyond its conventional meaning of country-to-country relations, the term 'foreign affairs' (外交) has multiple connotations, both in Chinese and English. It can refer to illicit sexual relations, and it can also be a form of praise, describing a person with exceptional interpersonal skills.¹²⁴⁸ While drawing attention to Taiwan's so-called 'difficult political conundrum',¹²⁴⁹ this exhibition demonstrated how Taiwan's artists are 'affirming that interaction with others is one way in which people achieve validation and strengthen identity'.¹²⁵⁰ As previously discussed, after the 1997 Venice Biennale, Taiwan was forced to relinquish its 'national' status and its exhibition was downgraded to a 'collaborative event', after the Chinese government, which was granted its own national pavilion in 2003,¹²⁵¹ raised objections to Taiwan's *national* representation in this biennale. It is impossible to gauge the extent to which Taiwan's demotion in this biennale impacted on the curatorial rationale underpinning this exhibition, but it was certainly noted in Taiwan's local media;¹²⁵² and works in this exhibition were conceptually framed around themes concerning the 'treatment of the disadvantaged' and 'imbalanced' global power relations.¹²⁵³

Drawn from theories propounded by the Russian literary critic, Mikhail Bakhtin, and by those of the philosopher Jacques Rancière's on 'dialogism' and the relationship between politics and subjectivity, Chang seeks to demonstrate how identity is both a relational and political construction.¹²⁵⁴ The four participating artists included: Chen Chieh-jen and Chang Chien-chi, both of

¹²⁴⁸ TFAM, 'Foreign Affairs: Artists from Taiwan', press release, 2009, (online).

¹²⁴⁹ TFAM, 'Foreign Affairs: Artists from Taiwan', press release, 2009, (online).

¹²⁵⁰ Chang Fang-wei, 'Foreign Affairs from Within', in *Foreign Affairs*, 2009, p.10.

¹²⁵¹ In 2003 China was offered its own national pavilion, but it was unable to attend, purportedly due to SARS – see Ashley Rawlings, 'Mediating National Image: The Politics of Cultural Diplomacy', *Art Asia Pacific*, no. 63, 2009, p.105.

¹²⁵² *Taipei Times*, 'Foreign Affairs, local concerns', 31 March 2010, p.15. See <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/feat/archives/2010/03/31/2003469370> (accessed 10/9/2012).

¹²⁵³ *Taipei Times*, 'Foreign Affairs', 2010, (online).

¹²⁵⁴ Chang, 'Foreign Affairs from Within', in *Foreign Affairs*, 2009, p.13.

whom had represented Taiwan in previous Venice Biennales; Yu Cheng-ta who participated in the 2008 Taipei Biennial; and the architect Hsieh Ying-chun. Their work explored notions of displacement in relation to migrant labour, and the impact of natural disasters and language barriers on one's sense of identity. Border-crossings and notions of citizenship were implicit, and in Chen Chieh-jen's film *Empire Borders* (帝國邊界) (2009)¹²⁵⁵ the politics of Taiwan's identity was foregrounded (fig. 7.8). In this film the artist recounts the stories of eight women from Taiwan whose non-immigrant visa applications to the United States were refused; and it subsequently explores the plight of eight Chinese brides who were being discriminated against by Taiwan's National Immigration Agency. The first part of the film was inspired by Chen's own experience when his application for a short-term non-immigrant US visa was not only rejected, but he himself was treated in a demeaning manner by an American consular official in Taiwan who allegedly believed he was seeking to immigrate illegally to the United States.¹²⁵⁶ According to various curators and critics from Taiwan, as well as in media reports, this film captures the experiences of many Taiwan citizens when their visa applications to visit the West, especially to America, are rejected by immigration officials.¹²⁵⁷ One journalist remarked that this individual work evoked the sense of humiliation experienced, on a national scale, when Taiwan's exhibition was demoted in the Venice Biennale to a 'collaborative event'.¹²⁵⁸ Subsequently, Chen set up a

¹²⁵⁵ This film was shown at the TFAM in his aforementioned exhibition in 2010, and examines the effects of the post-Cold War politics on the psyche, or what is described as the 'imperial mentality' of Taiwanese today, Amy Cheng quoted in Chang, 'Foreign Affairs from Within', in *Foreign Affairs*, 2009, p.18.

¹²⁵⁶ When in fact he was applying to attend an exhibition in the United States to which he had been invited. Amy Cheng, 'Chen Chieh-jen's Empire's Borders I', in *Foreign Affairs*, 2009, p.68; Rawlings, 'Mediating National Image', *Art Asia Pacific*, 2009, p.105.

¹²⁵⁷ For example see Chang, 'Foreign Affairs from Within', in *Foreign Affairs*, 2009, p.17; Cheng, 'Chen Chieh-jen's Empire's', in *Foreign Affairs*, 2009, pp.68-72; *Taipei Times*, 'Foreign Affairs', 2010, (online). About this work see Chen Chieh-jen, 'Empire's Borders I: Introduction and Artist Statement', http://www.itpark.com.tw/artist/essays_data/10/843/73/en (accessed 20/6/2011). Since October 2012, Taiwan has become part of the US' visa-waiver programme enabling people from Taiwan with eligible passports to visit the US without a visa for ninety days or less.

¹²⁵⁸ *Taipei Times*, 'Foreign Affairs', 2010, (online).

website entitled 'The Illegal Immigrant' (我懷疑你是要偷渡), where he invited other people from Taiwan to share their experiences. Within days his blog had allegedly attracted hundreds of responses.¹²⁵⁹ Chen's work directly engages in post-Cold War politics, underscoring the continuing dominant role the United States has played, both in Taiwan and globally. Indeed, he asserts that

This is not merely a powerful nation's policy to control its borders and the movement of populations, but also an extemporaneous martial law measure that the Americans enact in the name of fighting terrorism, and a "discipline strategy" employed by a powerful country on the people of a weaker land, an ongoing public works project by an empire meaning to tame its territories.¹²⁶⁰

In this 2009 exhibition the curator explores these issues from a more dispassionate perspective, employing theoretical discourses that underline 'the operational logic' of the new global order.¹²⁶¹ However, the intention of this exhibition was fundamentally to foreground Taiwan's longstanding political predicament. Specifically, Chang argues that

[This] exhibition cannot and should not avoid references to and associations with Taiwan's identity difficulties around the world.... [Although] it does not and cannot possibly take the role of the state, [...] it aims to provoke self-awareness of viewers through individual expression, resulting in inspiration and action.¹²⁶²

Through these artworks presented in *Foreign Affairs*, the curator set out to raise global consciousness about Taiwan's plight in the world and, in so doing, challenges theories that promote notions of 'global citizenship' and de-territorialisation. According to Chang, in this so-called borderless community, Taiwan remains on the geopolitical periphery while China occupies a central position not only within the Asian region, but also globally. Chapter Eight discusses how China's growing economic power and cultural prominence on the world stage impacted on Taiwan's art field, and how Taiwan's government, along with art museums, curators and artists increasingly began to engage

¹²⁵⁹ According to the artist this blogsite (www.ccjonstrike.blogspot.com) provides 'a public forum for other Taiwanese citizens who have encountered similar violent language to relate and exchange their experiences'. Chen Chieh-jen, in *Foreign Affairs*, 2009, p.59.

¹²⁶⁰ Chen Chieh-jen cited in Cheng, 'Chen Chieh-jen's Empire's', in *Foreign Affairs*, 2009, p.69.

¹²⁶¹ Chang Fang-wei, 'Foreign Affairs from Within: Dialogism of I-for-the-Other', *Foreign Affairs: Artists from Taiwan*, TFAM, 2009, p.11.

¹²⁶² Chang Fang-wei, 'Foreign Affairs from Within', in *Foreign Affairs*, 2009, p.11.

with China. Essentially, *Foreign Affairs* exemplified the discursive shift that took place during this decade when identity was no longer viewed through the prism of the nation, in essentialist terms, but rather from a broader global perspective, as a process of cross-cultural encounter.

One of the effects of globalisation is that it emphasises the diversity and multiplicity of identities, generating new possibilities and positions of identification, which are fluid and unfixed.¹²⁶³ Through the microcosm of these exhibition case studies, this chapter has demonstrated that, by the beginning of this century, a new transnational cultural imaginary had emerged that was local and global, relational and spatial and that displaced territorially-bounded and essentialist conceptions of *Taiwanese* identity. While globalising forces paved the way for this cultural shift from a Taiwan-centred discourse to a more inclusive and expansive local-global trajectory, it has been argued that the nation-state also played an important role. This chapter also examines the key roles played by the TFAM, exhibition curators and artists in these processes of globalisation as well as in opening up Taiwan's art field to cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary concepts and practices that effectively destabilised centre-periphery and native-foreign cultural binaries. Focusing on Taiwan's two major international exhibitions, the Taipei and Venice biennials, it demonstrates the extent to which the boundaries of museological and artistic practice were re-defined and expanded during this decade to facilitate opportunities for local-global dialogue and to enhance competition on the international stage.

Importantly, this chapter demonstrates how this local-global cultural re-orientation in the visual arts developed in accordance with the Taiwan government's cultural policy objectives of keeping Taiwan at 'the forefront of

¹²⁶³ Stuart Hall, 'The Question of Cultural Identity', in *Modernity and its Futures*, Tony McGrew, Stuart Hall, David Held and (eds.), Polity Press Cambridge, 1992, pp.274-314.

global trends'.¹²⁶⁴ Globalisation and increased local-global interaction both served to preserve Taiwan's local cultural particularities and simultaneously helped to integrate Taiwan more fully into the global community. Overshadowed by China's growing economic and cultural prominence in the world, globalisation was a means by which Taiwan could become part of the international community while also maintaining the peaceful relations with China that remain vital for Taiwan's future growth and survival.

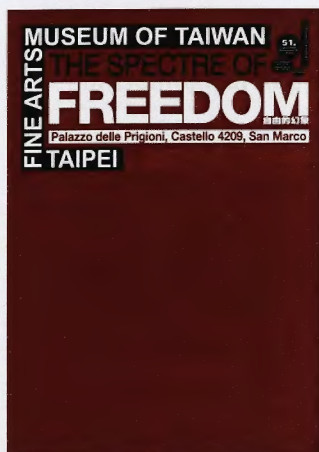
¹²⁶⁴ Ma, in *Do You Believe in Reality?* 2004, p.9.



Figures 7.1 & 7.2: (top to bottom) *The Sky is the Limit* exhibition catalogue; Michael Ming-hong Lin, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Sept.9 2000-Jan 7, 2001, installation (in *The Sky is the Limit*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum)



Figures 7.3 & 7.4: (top to bottom) *A World Where Many Worlds Fit* (curated section within the 2008 Taipei Biennial); Wu Mali, *Tomorrow is a Lake Again*, 2008, mixed media installation (in the 2008 Taipei Biennial, Taipei Fine Arts Museum)



Figures 7.5 & 7.6 (left to right): *Spectre of Freedom* exhibition catalogue; Kuo I-chen, *Invade the Prigioni*, 2005, video installation (in *The Spectre of Freedom*, Venice Biennale, 2005)



Figures 7.7 & 7.8 (left to right): *Foreign Affairs* exhibition catalogue; Chen Chieh-jen, *Empires Borders I*, 2008-2009, single channel film (in *Foreign Affairs*, Venice Biennale, 2009)

CHAPTER EIGHT

Re-Orienting Taiwan: Cross-Strait Dialogue in the Museological Representation of Art from Taiwan (2000-2010)

It is already something of a platitude to describe the rise of China in the world as a defining moment in the twenty-first century.¹²⁶⁵ China's burgeoning economy, its expanding consumer markets, and its flourishing art market continue to attract significant media attention internationally, but its impact on its nearest neighbour, Taiwan, has received significantly less attention. What bearing has China's global ascent had on this island and on its quest for identity; and what effect, if any, has it had on Taiwan's art field? How has the global community's embrace of China impacted upon Taiwan's art community, which strives to compete on the international stage and where Chinese artists now claim the spotlight? This chapter explores some of these questions in relation to the development of cross-strait connections and changing perceptions of identity in the visual art field. Under a new KMT government, relations between Taiwan and China have become noticeably closer over the past five years, as governments in Taipei and Beijing have introduced new economic and cultural reforms, which have opened up opportunities for cross-strait dialogue and exchange. Although these changes are relatively recent, their impact is discernible in the visual art field, and particularly in the museological representation of art. This chapter demonstrates how Taiwan's identity is being re-defined and re-presented in the museological representation of art, as distinctive but, critically, no longer culturally separate from China.

¹²⁶⁵ There is a growing amount of literature on the global rise of China. See for example: David Scott, *The 'Chinese Century': The Challenge to Global Order*, Palgrave Macmillan, England, 2008; Martin Jacques, *When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order*, Penguin, New York, 2009; William Rees-Mogg, 'This is the Chinese Century', *The Times*, London, 3 Jan. 2005.
http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/william_rees_mogg/article407883.ece (accessed 10/9/2011).

Focusing on the development of cross-strait relations in the museological representation of art, this chapter demonstrates how contact between Taiwan and China in the visual art field has not only accelerated over the past decade, but it has also become more official. This is exemplified through exhibitions of Taiwan and Chinese art presented by museums on both sides of the Strait, including *Visions of Pluralism* (1999), *The Odyssey of Art in Taiwan 1950-2000* (2006), and *Post-Martial Law vs. Post'89: The Contemporary Art in Taiwan and China* (2007) (hereafter *Post-Martial Law vs. Post'89*); along with several solo exhibitions of Chinese artists' works presented at the TFAM under the government's new quota system. These exhibitions were different in scale and scope but their objectives were remarkably similar: to emphasise Taiwan's democratic and culturally pluralistic identity; and to develop a dialogue between Taiwan and China. This identity narrative was in accord with the KMT's cultural policy objectives, which set out to promote mutual understanding by highlighting Taiwan and China's shared cultural values and traditions, while simultaneously asserting its democratic status. It is the contention of this chapter that these and other exhibitions were deployed by governments on both sides of the Taiwan Strait as vehicles for soft power, to promote mutual dialogue and forge closer cross-strait connections.

The extent to which Taiwan's rapprochement with China has advanced or impeded the development of art in Taiwan, and altered perceptions of identity is central to this study. I argue that the official opening up of cross-Strait links has generated unprecedented opportunities for some members of Taiwan's art community who have chosen to capitalize upon them; and for others it has yielded significant challenges. While several artists, curators and gallerists are taking advantage of China's thriving economy and art market, others are more circumspect and have criticised the KMT's focus on China, and the impact it is having on Taiwan's museums. While political and museological narratives on identity remain correlated, this chapter demonstrates how the symbiotic relationship between politics and artistic production that existed during the

early-mid 1990s has shifted as artists' views on identity no longer centre on the nation or the national collective, but instead focus on the individual and the world. The effects of globalisation, the rise of China, domestic political and economic concerns along with generational change, have contributed to this shift in the visual art field where new alliances are being forged, which are global, and now necessarily encompass China.

The development of cross-strait relations in art pre-2000

With the abolition of martial law in 1987, restrictions on travel, trade and communications were lifted, opening up unprecedented opportunities for cross-strait dialogue and exchange. However, with the rise of Taiwan nationalism and Taiwan-China separatism, cross-strait interaction was generally limited to business, scholarly or cultural activities, which did not directly involve the government. In the art field, individuals including the Hong Kong-based curator and gallerist, Johnson Chang (Chang Tsong-zung 張頌仁)¹²⁶⁶ played a pioneering role in facilitating cross-strait dialogue in Taiwan. After establishing Hanart TZ Gallery in Hong Kong in 1983, Chang opened another small gallery in Taipei in 1988, when Taiwan's art market was thriving, and it was one of the leading galleries of contemporary art in Taiwan until it closed in 2001. During the 1990s, it organised and presented a range of local and international exhibitions, mostly from East Asia, and audiences in Taiwan were introduced to works by some of China's most important contemporary artists.¹²⁶⁷ For example, in 1989, the gallery presented *The Stars 10 Years*, which featured some of China's most prominent Chinese artists;¹²⁶⁸

¹²⁶⁶ For more information on Chang and Hanart Gallery see http://www.artzinechina.com/display_vol_aid172_en.html and http://contemporary.chinese.culture.academic.ru/97/Chang_Tsong-zung (accessed 31/1/2012).

¹²⁶⁷ For example, Hanart (Taipei) presented *Gu Wenda - The Mythos of Lost Dynasties 1984-1997* a major installation commissioned by the United Nations which I saw in Taipei. In addition in 1998, the gallery presented Zhang Xiaogang's 'Bloodline' series.

¹²⁶⁸ This exhibition was organised to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the first exhibition of the Stars which was held in Beijing in October 1979. It featured works by artists including Huang Rui, Zhong Ah Cheng, Ma Desheng and Wang Keping.

and, in 1993, it featured a selection of works from another landmark travelling exhibition the gallery organised entitled *New Art from China: Post-1989*. This exhibition included works by Chinese artists including Fang Lijun (方力鈞), Wang Guangyi and Yu Youhan, whose works later re-appeared in exhibitions, such as *Post-Martial Law vs. Post'89* organised by Taiwan museums.¹²⁶⁹ The gallery also represented some Taiwan artists (mostly painters),¹²⁷⁰ and Chang played an important curatorial role developing exhibitions with museums in Taiwan.¹²⁷¹

New Art from China was directly followed by another exhibition, *New Art, New Tribes – Taiwan Art in the Nineties*,¹²⁷² curated by the local independent curator Victoria Lu who, like Chang, was also Shanghai-born and an 'outsider', not because she was a foreigner but because of her political views. The scheduling and curatorial overlap¹²⁷³ between these exhibitions was clearly

¹²⁶⁹ *New Art from China: Post-1989* featured works by twenty-two artists from China and it travelled from Hong Kong and Taipei to the United States and Australia from 1993 to 1998.

¹²⁷⁰ Hanart gallery has traditionally represented Chinese artists, and particularly painters. From the late 1980s it displayed and promoted several artists from Taiwan including Cheng Tsai-tung, Yu Peng, Chiu Ya-tsai, Hsu Yu-jen, Huang Chih-yang (all painters working in a figurative or literati-style ink painting tradition) as well as Ju Ming (sculpture). It now represents a range of artists from Taiwan, including Yang Mao-lin and Yao Jui-chung.

¹²⁷¹ In addition to presenting works at the Hanart galleries in Hong Kong and Taipei, Chang also worked with the TFAM, and other art museums in Taiwan. Exhibitions Chang has curated for museums in Taiwan include: *The Power of the Word* (1999) presented at the NTMFA in Taichung; *Fear of Water* (2000) at the TFAM; *The Yellow Box: Contemporary Calligraphy and Painting in Taiwan* (2004) featuring works by five local ink painters which was accompanied by a publication and seminar presented by the TFAM. Chang has also been invited to participate in international forums including the TFAM's 2006 Taipei Biennial, *Dirty Yoga*. Chang has also curated several international touring exhibitions which has included art from Taiwan. These include *Reckoning with the Past: Contemporary Chinese Painting* (which he co-curated with Graeme Murray) featuring works from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan; and *A Strange Heaven: Photography from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong* (2003) that toured Europe. As a reflection of Chang's international status, he curated the Chinese Exhibitions at the São Paulo Biennials in 1994 and 1996; and in 1995 he selected the Chinese artists for the Venice Biennale centenary exhibition.

¹²⁷² *New Art New Tribes* opened at Hanart (Taipei) May 1993, two months after *New Art from China: Post-1989*.

¹²⁷³ Both exhibitions focused on a similar time frame (i.e. 1990s) and were divided into six conceptually similar themes which explored the relationship between art, politics and society. The themes in *New Art from China: Post-1989* include: Political Pop, Rogue Cynicism, Wounded Romantic Spirit, Emotional Bondage, Retreat into Formalism and Prints. In *New Art, New*

designed to compare and contrast works from China and Taiwan. In the *New Art, New Tribes* catalogue, references were made to the Chinese exhibition, and in his catalogue essay, later published in *Asian Art News*,¹²⁷⁴ the political and cultural commentator, Wang Hsing-ching (王杏慶), (who writes under the pseudonym Nan Fangshuo, 南方朔), remarked upon these artists' shared interest in social criticism.¹²⁷⁵ However, in this essay, the author principally focuses on the differences between artists' works from Taiwan and China, contrasting the latter's legacy of communism, collectivism and its culturally 'dejected' condition with Taiwan's 'fervent' democracy, which celebrates diversity and individualism.¹²⁷⁶ This distinction, which was essentially ideological, was underscored in subsequent cross-strait exhibition narratives, which sought to distinguish Taiwan from China politically, while simultaneously asserting their shared Chinese cultural origins.

In 1998, the exhibition, *New Voices: Contemporary art Dialogue Among Taipei, Hong Kong and Shanghai* was one of the first exhibitions that brought together works by contemporary artists from both sides of the Taiwan Strait. As its title suggests, this exhibition was promoted as a regional city-to-city 'dialogue', enabling the curators to circumvent the politics of the nation and the naming of Taiwan. Featuring contemporary artists' works from these three metropolitan centres, this exhibition was also a privately-funded initiative in Taiwan,¹²⁷⁷ and it was co-curated by local independent curator JJ Shih (石瑞

Tribes they included: The Evaluators, The Chroniclers, The Activators, The Conceptualizers, The Urbanites, and The Shamans.

¹²⁷⁴ Nan Fangshuo, 'Farewell Comrade: Some Differences Between Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese Art', *Asian Art News*, vol. 3, no.4, July/Aug. 1993, pp.40-41.

¹²⁷⁵ While discussing their shared interest in social criticism, Nan argues that Taiwan's artists 'lag behind the prophetic criticisms made by Chinese artists'. Nan Fangshuo, 'The Retirement of the "Comrade": A Dialogue of Chinese Art in a Global Context', in *New Art, New Tribes - Taiwan Art in the Nineties*, Hanart (Taipei) Gallery, Taipei, 1993, pp.15-16.

¹²⁷⁶ Nan, 'The Retirement of the "Comrade"', in *New Art, New Tribes*, 1993, p.16.

¹²⁷⁷ In Taiwan this exhibition was presented under the auspices of the private Dimensions Art Foundation. In Hong Kong it was displayed at the Hong Kong Arts Centre, where Oscar Ho was the Chief Curator and which receives government funding,

仁)¹²⁷⁸ and Hong Kong's Oscar Ho. A third curator, Li Xianting,¹²⁷⁹ from China was expected to participate but Li withdrew from this exhibition; and the exhibition did not travel to Shanghai.¹²⁸⁰ In Taipei it opened at the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall (國立中正紀念堂) a building that has national significance, and which became the focus of political debate in 2007.¹²⁸¹ Why it was not presented by the TFAM is unclear, but the fact it was shown at this venue indicates the reasons were unlikely to have been a political response to Taiwan-China separatism.¹²⁸² Travel restrictions continued to be imposed on Chinese visiting Taiwan at this time, and participating artists from China were unable to come to Taiwan. Shih nevertheless claims the exhibition helped expand and develop local audiences' knowledge and understanding of China and its art and opened up cultural dialogue between Taiwan and China.¹²⁸³

A year later *Visions of Pluralism: Contemporary Art in Taiwan 1988-1999* (1999) (複數元的視野：台灣當代美術1988-1999), curated by Victoria Lu, and organised by the privately-run Mountain Art Culture and Education Foundation,¹²⁸⁴ opened in Beijing (fig. 8.1). This exhibition was one of the first,

¹²⁷⁸ JJ Shih curated the 1999 Venice Biennale discussed in Chapter Two.

¹²⁷⁹ See Chapter Four.

¹²⁸⁰ JJ Shih says he was unsure why Li Xianting withdrew but he did not believe it was for political reasons. Shih said they were unable to find a suitable venue in Shanghai because of the high rental charges public museums and galleries in China, and the local art critic he was working with did not have the connections to find an appropriate gallery. JJ Shih, Interview with the Author, 2009, Taipei.

¹²⁸¹ As part of its de-sinification campaign, in 2007, the DPP national government re-named the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial the 'National Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall' which provoked considerable national debate. Two years later it reverted back to its original name with the KMT came to power.

<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2007/05/20/2003361648> and <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2007/05/10/2003360233> (accessed 20/11/2011). Also see Han Baode, 'Rethinking Historical Monuments', *Taipei Times*, 12 Nov. 2007, p.58.

¹²⁸² Shih recalls that when installing this exhibition there was some debate about if he might be permitted to place a painting of the PRC's former leader, Mao Zedong, by the Chinese political pop artist Li Shan near a statue of the KMT Chinese Nationalist leader, Chiang Kai-shek. He says, 'I was not allowed to put it on top of or at the side of Chiang's statue, but under was ok'. JJ Shih, Interview the Author, 2009, Taipei.

¹²⁸³ JJ Shih, Interview the Author, 2009, Taipei.

¹²⁸⁴ Based in Kaohsiung, Mountain Art Culture and Education Foundation is owned by a Taiwan business entrepreneur and collector of traditional Chinese art. In addition to presenting

and certainly the largest exhibitions of Taiwan contemporary art presented in China.¹²⁸⁵ Remarkably, it was presented at the National Art Museum of China (NAMOC 中國美術館), which is arguably China's most important state-run art museum; and in Taiwan it subsequently opened at the National Museum of History (NMH), which was equally significant as it was one of Taiwan's time-honoured national institutions with strong historical and cultural connections to China.¹²⁸⁶ Given this exhibition's 'national' significance, it was no surprise that references to Taiwan's national identity were virtually absent in the visual and textual narratives underpinning this exhibition. While seeking to highlight the pluralistic aspects of Taiwan's culture, the curator selected mostly non-representational paintings or figurative paintings, which were devoid of political symbols or significance.¹²⁸⁷ Works inspired by Chinese traditional painting were ubiquitous, and I argue that the inclusion of these works was strategic, designed to establish a mutual vocabulary between Taiwan and China and reinforce a sense of common culture. While acknowledging Taiwan and China's cultural differences, which have emerged over 'one hundred years of separation', the exhibition set out to 'initiate a mutual dialogue between Taiwan and Mainland China' based on Taiwan and China's 'shared experiences'.¹²⁸⁸ These were explored not only in relation to the influence of Chinese cultural tradition but, in her essay, Lu also highlights the impact of

exhibitions of Taiwan and Chinese art, it also produced numerous publications, and offers student scholarships. It had galleries in Kaohsiung and Beijing. For more information on the Mountain Art Foundation and its collecting and exhibition history see www.mountainart.com.cn (accessed 21/5/2011).

¹²⁸⁵ *Visions of Pluralism* comprised a total of 138 works by seventy-five artists from Taiwan.

¹²⁸⁶ For more information on the NMH see Chapter One p.53. After its opening in Beijing, *Visions of Pluralism* toured to five venues in Taiwan, including Mountain Art Museum in Kaohsiung, the NMH, and to three universities in Taiwan. Lu stated there was significant pressure on her to postpone the exhibition opening in China, due to the effects of the major earthquake in Taiwan on 21 Sept. 1999. Victoria Lu, Interview with the Author, 2009, Taipei.

¹²⁸⁷ Of the six themes, one was devoted exclusively to 'Abstract Art', and many other works presented under other themes were inspired by minimalism or abstract expressionism. In the theme 'Tradition and Innovation', most works were mountain-scapes, reminiscent of Chinese literati painting, and employed ink and brush (水墨, *shuimo*) techniques e.g. Luo Ching, Yuang Jai, Yu Chen-yao, Yu Peng, Yuang Chin-ta, Chen Hung-mien, and Wang You-sen.

¹²⁸⁸ Victoria Lu, 'Curatorial Worlds', in *Visions of Pluralism: Contemporary Art in Taiwan*, Mountain Art Culture and Education Foundation, Kaohsiung, 1999, p.17.

Western capitalism and modernism in both Taiwan and China, which, she claims, have been 'weighed down by the prevalence of Western culture'.¹²⁸⁹

Although several of Taiwan's most politically engaged artists, including Yang Mao-lin, Wu Tien-chang, Mei Dean-E, and Wu Mali were represented in this exhibition, their more politically explicit works were not chosen. For example, two of Yang Mao-lin's vibrant paintings entitled *Five Fortunes* (1998), which examine the effects of globalisation and popular culture in Taiwan were selected instead of his widely acclaimed *Made in Taiwan* series (see Chapter Four), the very title of which is likely to have aroused suspicion amongst Chinese officials. Evidently, Mei's *Identity* installation, which parodied Taiwan-China relations (see Chapter Three), was too politically sensitive; instead two mixed media works from his *Postmodern* series, which visually referenced Chinese cultural tradition were chosen (fig. 8.2). Furthermore, in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition, essays written by some of Taiwan's leading art scholars and curators¹²⁹⁰ also avoided contentious political issues.¹²⁹¹ While at least two essays alluded to the 'one China' issue in relation to Taiwan's democratic status and its future,¹²⁹² remarkably only one writer, the art historian Hsiao Chong-ray (蕭瓊瑞), explicitly raised the delicate issue of

¹²⁸⁹ Victoria Lu, 'Curatorial Worlds', in *Visions of Pluralism*, 1999, p.17.

¹²⁹⁰ These five essayists included Hsiao Chong-ray, Nan Fangshuo, Huang Hai-ming, JJ Shih, and Wang Jia-ji.

¹²⁹¹ Although the exhibition category 'Female Art' included some of the most politically-charged works, the artist and guest essayist, Fu Chia-Wen Lien was content to present an historical and theoretical analysis on the role and meaning of feminist art, and barely mentioned Taiwan and the artists in the exhibition. Kao Chien-hui similarly provided a synopsis of abstract art in Taiwan, explored within the context of Chinese ancient philosophy and Western modernism; in his essay on art, technology and the mass media, Alan Chung (Zhang Xin-long) draws on Walter Benjamin's essay on mechanical reproduction to explore the effects of the internet and computer technology on Taiwan artists' works. See Fu Chia-wen Lien 'Feminist Art and the Representation of the Female Body', pp.72-77; Kao Chien-hui, 'Another Spiritual Perch-Abstract Art in Taiwan', pp.63-67; Alan H. Chung, 'Art Technology and the Mass Communication' (sic), pp.92-95 in *Visions of Pluralism*, 1999.

¹²⁹² For example Huang Hai-ming discusses the political pressures and uncertainty surrounding Taiwan's future and Wang Jia-ji discusses the 'fascism' of Chiang Kai-shek's KMT government and makes a clear distinction between Chinese traditional culture and Taiwan's cultural plurality. See Huang Hai-ming, 'Atavism and Nostalgia'; Wang Ji-ji, 'Traditions and Applications in 20th Century Taiwan Art', in *Visions of Pluralism*, 1999, pp. 40-46; 83-88,

Taiwan-China relations. After acknowledging the 'Tiananmen massacre', which, he claims, 'barely caused a ripple' in Taiwan, Hsiao discusses the opening up of cross-strait relations during the post-martial law period.¹²⁹³ Notably, in the context of China's growing political, economic and cultural influence in Taiwan, he notes that, 'strangely enough', despite 'feeling the underlying hostilities' of China's 'political manoeuvres' most local artists 'do not speak out on the subject of Taiwan independence', which he admits is 'unusual' and deserves investigation.¹²⁹⁴ Certainly, the subject of Taiwan independence is no longer the centre of national or cultural debate, but that is not to say China's 'political manoeuvres', as Hsiao describes it, are not contested in the visual art field as I will later discuss.

Evidently, in this exhibition and its catalogue, the curator and/or exhibition organisers were seeking to sidestep national identity politics. When asked about her choice of works in this exhibition in relation to censorship issues in China, Lu rather flippantly remarked, 'censorship is everywhere in the world...it was not invented by the Communist Party...I have good relations there and I am also careful...Taiwan is more relaxed'.¹²⁹⁵ Soon after this exhibition Lu moved to China and, as her comment suggests, she is acutely aware of the need to develop good working relations in China. With the official opening up of cross-strait relations in the new millennium Taiwan's artists, curators and museums are becoming more adept at navigating censorship issues in China, which still occasionally arise, particularly in the naming of Taiwan, and these issues are sometimes played out in the public sphere.¹²⁹⁶

¹²⁹³ Hsiao Chong-ray, 'From Radical Criticism to Gradual Sedimentation', in *Visions of Pluralism*, 1999, p.30. It is noteworthy that in this particular catalogue essay the words Tiananmen 'massacre' not 'incident' were used in the English translation.

¹²⁹⁴ Hsiao Chong-ray, 'From Radical Criticism', in *Visions of Pluralism*, 1999, p.31.

¹²⁹⁵ Victoria Lu, Interview with the Author, 2009, Taipei.

¹²⁹⁶ For example, in October 2010, at the Tokyo Film Festival, a dispute between Taiwan and China developed when a Chinese official demanded that Taiwan's representatives should be renamed 'China Taiwan delegation' just before the opening ceremony. Also in 2000, Taiwan's delegation at the Venice architecture biennale, had to enter under the name 'Taiwan Museum of Art', or otherwise as 'China, Taiwan', after protests from the Chinese government. Monique Chu, 'China's Protest Forces New Name for Taiwan Art Entry', *Taipei Times*, 30 May 2000, p.2.

A rather amusing example worthy of note was in the 2004 Shanghai Biennial, where a wall-label displayed alongside a work by internationally-renowned Taiwan artist Chen Chieh-jen¹²⁹⁷ had repeatedly been vandalised by members of the audience who clearly held strong views on the issue of Taiwan sovereignty (fig. 8.3). On the original label the artist was acknowledged as coming from 'Taipei, China', which a member of the audience had crossed out and replaced with 'Taiwan', and another subsequently replaced it with 'China'. In addition, on the top of this small label, the Chinese characters, 'Communism will liberate Taiwan' were boldly inscribed; in response, another visitor wrote 'World Peace People' in English. As this and other more recent international incidents and exhibitions demonstrate, the politics of Taiwan's international representation continues to be a sticking point in the development of Taiwan-China relations.

Visions of Pluralism was officially commended for making a significant 'step forward'¹²⁹⁸ in the development of cross-strait cultural relations. Although the media coverage of this exhibition in China was negligible,¹²⁹⁹ Lu nevertheless claims it attracted significant public attention amongst audiences in China, not only because it was one of the first and largest exhibitions from Taiwan, but also because people were surprised by the diversity and sophistication of Taiwan art. She asserts that,

At that time Taiwan contemporary art *appeared* to be more advanced to Mainlanders, as China did not have multimedia installation, and they don't have feminist movement...I purposely made this show in 1999 because I predicted that [by] 2000...Chinese artists would be on stage and playing the

<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/local/print/2000/05/30/0000038041> (accessed 15/10/2011).

¹²⁹⁷ See Chapter Two pp. 139-140.

¹²⁹⁸ Lin Cheng-chih, 'New Age, New Vision', in *Visions of Pluralism*, 1999, p.5.

¹²⁹⁹ Beyond short press release-based information and exhibition listings in the Chinese media, I have been unable to find anything more substantial such as reviews of this exhibition in Beijing.

main role, not Taiwanese artists...[and] I predicted right. By 2000 Chinese art was even more pluralistic [than Taiwan art]...so we did it just in time.¹³⁰⁰

Lu's claim that Chinese art became more pluralistic than Taiwan's is highly debateable and contentious. However, it is indisputable that, by the twenty-first century, Chinese art was attracting significant attention, globally as well as in Taiwan. Since President Ma Ying-jeou came to power in 2008 especially, cross-strait interaction has not only increased on an unofficial level, but there has been an escalation of government sponsored initiatives, including museum exhibition exchanges between China and Taiwan. Before examining these artistic developments, it is important to first explore some of the key economic and political factors that caused this shift and significantly impacted on the visual art field.

Taiwan-China relations post-2000 – economics, politics and art

When the DPP's pro-independence advocate Chen Shui-bian (2000-2008) was elected President in 2000 he pledged he would not pursue Taiwan independence.¹³⁰¹ Despite these assurances, however, during his two terms in government, Chen stepped up his Taiwanisation programme, aimed at de-sinicising Taiwan, which essentially involved erasing or at least reducing the presence of China in Taiwan. Changes included: replacing the names of state-owned enterprises that incorporated the name 'China' with 'Taiwan'; revising the education curriculum and re-writing school books to present a more Taiwan-centred perspective on Taiwan's history and identity (which China objected to, accusing the DPP of promoting independence); and removing

¹³⁰⁰ Victoria Lu, Interview with the Author, 2009, Taipei.

¹³⁰¹ In his inauguration speech, Chen pledged what is known as the 'Four Noes and One Without' (四不一沒有 or 四不) in which he stipulated that as long as China does not use military force against Taiwan, his government would not: (1. declare independence; (2. change the name from 'The Republic of China' to the 'Republic of Taiwan'; (3. change the ROC Constitution to include 'state-to-state' relations; (4. promote a referendum on unification or independence. The 'One Without' was that he would not abolish the National Unification Council and the National Unification Guidelines. For more information see Jacobs, 'Taiwanization in Taiwan's Politics', in *Cultural, Ethnic and Political Nationalism*, 2005, p.43.

statues of Chiang Kai-shek from public spaces.¹³⁰² Chen also launched a 'UN for Taiwan' campaign, which explicitly promoted Taiwan independence (fig. 8.4).¹³⁰³ Moreover, a year after China ratified its Anti-Secession Law (反分裂國家法) in 2005, confirming it would use 'non-peaceful means' should Taiwan declare independence,¹³⁰⁴ Chen provocatively dismantled the National Unification Council (NUC) and, along with it, the Guidelines set up in 1990 to facilitate dialogue and, ultimately, unification with China.¹³⁰⁵ Amidst fears of a military attack from China,¹³⁰⁶ and given the effects of the 2008 global financial crisis, support for Chen rapidly diminished, both domestically and internationally. His lack of economic management, his alleged corruption, and inconsistent policies, and 'reckless'¹³⁰⁷ behaviour towards China are believed to have contributed to the downfall of this once popular President.¹³⁰⁸

¹³⁰² Bi-yu Chang (Chang Bi-yu), 'From Taiwanisation to De-Sinification: Culture Construction in Taiwan since the 1990s', *China Perspectives*, no. 56, Nov-Dec. 2004.

<http://chinaperspectives.revues.org/438> (accessed 9/8/2011); Taylor, 'Discovering a Nationalist Heritage', *China Heritage Quarterly*, 2009 (online); *The China Post*, 'Name Change to go on despite US objections', 11 Feb. 2007. <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/detail.asp?ID=102267&GRP=p2/Name-change.htm> (accessed 24/10/2011).

¹³⁰³ Chen changed the name to 'Taiwan' from the 'Republic of China' as had previously been proposed.

¹³⁰⁴ See Chapter Seven p.374 fn. 1222.

¹³⁰⁵ The National Unification Guidelines were discussed in Chapter One. When Chen was President he stated that National Unification Council it 'ceased to function' and that the Guidelines 'ceased to apply'. Ko Shu-ling and Charles Snyder, 'Chen Says NUC Will "Cease"', *Taipei Times*, 28 Feb. 2006, p.1. <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2006/02/28/2003294988>; BBC News, 'Taiwan Scraps Unification Council', 27 Feb. 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4753974.stm> (accessed 20/9/2011).

¹³⁰⁶ A report issued by the Mainland Affairs Council in early 2007 warned that China had '998 missiles arrayed against Taiwan and is threatening to conquer Taiwan in 2015'. Chen-yuan Tung, 'Is China a Responsible Stakeholder?', 11 Jan. 2007, Mainland Affairs Council press release cited in Dennis V. Hickey, 'Beijing's Evolving Policy Toward Taipei: Engagement or Entrapment', *Issues & Studies*, issue 45, no. 1, March 2009, p.46.

¹³⁰⁷ Willem Van Kemenade, 'Taiwan, Voting for Trouble', *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 23, issue 2, Spring 2000, pp.140-143, 145. http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/washington_quarterly/v023/23.2kemenade.html (accessed 6/7/2011).

¹³⁰⁸ For more information on Chen's Presidency and downfall see John F. Copper, 'Taiwan's Failed President', *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, vol. 34, issue 4, Routledge, Jan. 2008, pp.179-192; Gunter Schubert and Stefan Braig, 'How to Face an Embracing China? The DPP's Identity Politics and Cross-Strait Relations During and After the Chen Shui-bian Era', in *Taiwanese Identity in the Twenty-first Century*, 2011, pp.72-94.

By the turn of the new millennium debates in Taiwan concerning its national identity centred on two key issues: its economic future and national security.¹³⁰⁹ With a flagging domestic economy,¹³¹⁰ Taiwan increasingly became more economically reliant on China, and is currently ranked Taiwan's foremost trading partner.¹³¹¹ Over time this deepening economic relationship has given rise to concerns within Taiwan that this small island is increasingly being drawn into China's powerful political orbit and that, as a consequence, Taiwan citizens will lose their political and cultural freedoms. Seeking to navigate these economic and political tensions, people in Taiwan are adopting a more flexible and pragmatic outlook towards China. As two national elections have shown, in Taiwan people generally support the *status quo*, which does not support unification (at least according to Beijing's terms based on 'one country, two systems'), nor does it promote Taiwan independence.¹³¹² Political campaigns that advocate Taiwan independence no longer receive

¹³⁰⁹ Copper, 'Taiwan's Failed President', in *Asian Affairs*, 2008; John Fuh-sheng Hsieh, 'National Identity and Taiwan's Mainland China Policy', *Journal of Contemporary China*, no.13, vol.40, Aug. 2004, pp.479-490. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1067056042000213355> (accessed 5/9/2010); Jacobs, 'Whither Taiwanization?', 2011, p.15 (forthcoming).

¹³¹⁰ In 2002 Taiwan's economy was the sixteenth largest in the world (based on its GNP) and by 2006 it ranked twenty-second. Copper, 'Taiwan's Failed President', in *Asian Affairs*, 2008, pp.183, 185. A report published in the media indicates that in 1996 Taiwan's export value was nearly ninety per cent of South Korea's but by 2007 it had fallen to sixty-six per cent and to fifty-six per cent in the first three quarters of 2011 – which is believed to have increased Taiwan's dependency on China. *Focus Taiwan*, 'China Times: Does the US Really Want to Push Taiwan Towards China?', 15 Oct. 2011.

http://focustaiwan.tw/ShowNews/WebNews_Detail.aspx?ID=201110150017&Type=aOPN (accessed 17/10/2011). Also see Lowell Dittmer, 'Taiwan as a Factor in China's Quest for National Identity', *Journal of Contemporary China*, no. 15, vol. 49, Nov. 2006, pp.671-686, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10670560600836721> (accessed 9/10/2011); Chu Yun-Han and Lin Chia-Lung, 'Consolidating Taiwan's New Democracy Amid Competing National Identities', *China Today: Economic Reforms, Social Cohesion and Collective Identities*, Fisac and L. Fernandez-Stembridge (eds.), Routledge, London, 2003, pp.240-267.

¹³¹¹ In Sept. 2011 Taiwan's Bureau of Foreign Trade ranked China its number one trading partner, contributing over sixteen per cent of Taiwan's total imports and exports. Bureau of Foreign Trade, 'Value of Exports and Imports by Country', 21 Sept. 2011.

<http://cus93.trade.gov.tw/ENGLISH/FSCE/> (accessed 20/10/2011). For more information on Taiwan's economic relations with China from the late 1980s and during the 1990s see Shambaugh, 'The Emergence of "Greater China"', *China Quarterly*, 1993, pp.656-657 (online).

¹³¹² According to surveys undertaken between 1994 and 2003 support for the *status quo* increased from 48.3 per cent to 53.8 per cent between Dec. 1994 and June 2003; while support for independence in June 2003 was only 18.8 per cent. Jacobs, 'Taiwanization in Taiwan's Politics', in *Cultural, Ethnic and Political Nationalism*, 2005, pp.46-47.

widespread support as demonstrated in the 2004 national referendum, which ultimately failed to endorse the DPP's bid to support Taiwan independence.¹³¹³ According to the Australian political scientist, Bruce Jacobs, Taiwan's leaders need to abandon the Chinese paradigm based on 'unification' and 'independence', which he describes as a 'leftover' from KMT rule and belongs to Taiwan's 'colonial past'.¹³¹⁴ Instead, he proposes that Taiwan's leaders should emphasise decolonisation, a process Taiwan shares with many other countries, and which he believes would win Taiwan greater support within the international community.¹³¹⁵ Jacobs, along with other DPP supporters, asserts that Taiwan is already a 'sovereign state', according to the requirements of international law, and therefore the unification versus independence argument is now 'irrelevant'.¹³¹⁶

Clearly, this is a political issue, which is contestable but, in the broader context of Taiwan's identity, scholars acknowledge that views on identity in Taiwan are no longer based on a 'Taiwanese' versus 'Chinese' dichotomy but are more

¹³¹³ In this nation-wide referendum, voters were asked two questions relating to whether Taiwan should take action should China not agree to withdraw its missiles aimed towards Taiwan; and whether the government should engage with China and negotiate a mutual deal that would ensure peace and stability. This referendum was widely viewed as a bid by Chen to promote Taiwan independence and with less than a fifty per cent turnout it was deemed invalid. Schubert and Braig, 'How to Face an Embracing China?', in *Taiwanese Identity in the Twenty-first Century*, 2011, pp.78-81; Dittmer, 'Taiwan's Aim-Inhibited Quest', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 2005, p.83.

¹³¹⁴ Jacobs, 'Whither Taiwanization?', 2011, p.20 (forthcoming).

¹³¹⁵ Jacobs, 'Whither Taiwanization?', 2011, p.1 (forthcoming). Jacobs also put forward this proposition in a symposium organised by the DPP in Taiwan and it received media coverage. See Chris Wang, 'Taiwan Should Focus on Decolonization: Academic', *Taipei Times*, 23 Apr. 2012. <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2012/04/23/2003531051> (accessed 2/5/2012). Decolonisation was also discussed in Chapter One pages 71, 82.

¹³¹⁶ Jacobs, 'Whither Taiwanization?', 2011, p.20 (forthcoming). In a recent statement, the former DPP Vice President Annette Lu claimed that Taiwan is in fact already independent and has been since 1996 when the first Presidential elections were held in Taiwan which the US government supported and which the PRC failed to stop. She claims that the ROC, that was established in China in 1912 by the Chinese Nationalists, is different to the ROC that now represents Taiwan. See Shih Hsiu-chuan, 'Taiwan Independent Since 1996: Lu', *Taipei Times*, 3 June 2012. <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2012/06/03/2003534405> (accessed 4/6/2012).

fluid and fragmented.¹³¹⁷ This is evident in a survey undertaken in 2002, which shows that eighty per cent of respondents identified politically as citizens of Taiwan (to the exclusion of China/Chinese); but paradoxically, more than sixty per cent of these respondents defined their cultural heritage as *Chinese*.¹³¹⁸ While these statistics are not necessarily representative of views within the microcosm of Taiwan's art field, they nevertheless broadly reflect the complex and conflicting perspectives on identity and cross-strait relations at this point in time.

It is also important to note that, with the global spread and volatility of financial markets, and the escalation of international terrorism, peaceful relations between Taiwan and China are also widely supported by the international community. Taiwan-China disputes are viewed by some countries as a threat to the development of US-China relations,¹³¹⁹ and to regional stability. A Korean scholar claims that 'the cross-Straits issue is a burden that has to be shouldered not only by Taiwan but also by East Asia as a whole'; as such, 'the dichotomous structure of the People's Republic of China versus Taiwan must be overcome to ensure ... regional peace.'¹³²⁰ Given Taiwan's economic and military reliance on both China and the United States respectively, it has been suggested that Taiwan's national destiny will to a large extent be determined by these two countries, the latter of which favours

¹³¹⁷ Wang and Liu elucidate four types of national identity in Taiwan: Taiwanese nationalist identity, the pro-Taiwan identity, the mixed identity and the greater China identity. See T.Y. Wang and I-Chou Liu, 'Contending Identities in Taiwan: Implications for Cross-Straits Relations', *Asian Survey*, vol.44, no.4, July/Aug. 2004, p.576. DOI: 10.1525/as.2004.44.4.568 (accessed 7/8/2011). Also see Rigger, *Politics in Taiwan*, 1999, pp.190-191.

¹³¹⁸ This survey was undertaken by telephone polling and a total of 1,115 people were interviewed. See Wang and Liu, 'Contending Identities', *Asian Survey*, 2004, pp.568-590.

¹³¹⁹ As a reflection of the international significance given to this issue, it has been reported that both Taiwan Presidents' inauguration speeches (ie. Chen Shui-bian and Ma Ying-jeou) are sent to officials in Washington and Beijing for their official 'approval' before being presented to the Taiwan public. For example see Jens Kastner, 'Taiwan's Ma Plays it Cool', *Asia Times*, 22 May 2012. <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/NE22Ad02.html> (accessed 22/5/2012).

¹³²⁰ Ji-woon Baik (Baik Ji-woon), 'East Asian Perspective on Taiwanese Identity: A Critical Reading of "Overcoming the Division System" of Taiwan', *A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies, Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, vol. 11, issue 4, 2010, pp.591, 593. DOI: 10.1080/14649373.2010.506780 (accessed 4/5/2011).

the *status quo* (meaning that Taiwan will remain separate from China, but will not become legally independent).¹³²¹

Against this backdrop, in 2008, the Hong Kong-born KMT leader, Ma Ying-jeou, Taipei's former Mayor, became Taiwan's President, and was subsequently re-elected to serve another term in 2012. In his 2008 inaugural speech, Ma's views on Taiwan independence *vis-à-vis* China were made patently clear. He announced that, as President, he would ensure that 'Taiwan will be a stakeholder and will not rock the boat in the region. By stakeholder, I mean peacemaker',¹³²² and he maintains his position based on the 'three nos': no unification, no independence and no use of force. Quoting his counterpart, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China and then President of the People's Republic of China, Hu Jintao (胡锦涛), Ma emphasises the importance of 'building mutual trust, shelving controversies, [and] finding commonalities despite differences'.¹³²³ Seeking to establish a diplomatic truce between the two sides, for the first time in seventeen years, the KMT withdrew Taiwan's annual application for entry into the United Nations in 2009, signifying a critical shift in Taiwan's campaign for national sovereignty and a move towards reconciliation. Ma declared, 'in resolving cross-Straits issues, what matters most is not sovereignty but [our] core values and a way of life'.¹³²⁴

This reference to 'core values' is significant, as it has important cultural implications. The term is central to the KMT's political rhetoric on 'mutual understanding' and it specifically refers to Taiwan and China's shared cultural

¹³²¹ Copper, 'Taiwan's Failed President', *Asian Affairs*, 2008, p.190. Also see Copper, *Taiwan: Nation-State or Province?*, 2003.

¹³²² BBC News, 'Taiwan Victor Promises China Ties', 23 Mar. 2008. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7310143.stm>. Also see Phil Chetwynd and Peter Harmsen, 'Taiwan, PRC at Historic Juncture: Ma', *Taipei Times*, 17 Apr. 2010. <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/print/2010/04/17/2003470801> (accessed 26/6/2011).

¹³²³ Ma's Inauguration Address, 20 May 2008. <http://tecocbcm.org.vn/en/data/president-ma.pdf> (accessed 28/10/2011).

¹³²⁴ Ma's Inauguration Address, 2008 (online).

heritage. This is defined in relation to Confucian principles, based on 'benevolence, righteousness, diligence and honesty';¹³²⁵ and the fact that Taiwan and China share the same official language (Mandarin), and have some common cultural traditions and customs. Since Taiwan did not undergo a Cultural Revolution, it has been suggested by Taiwan's President that Taiwan might in fact be more 'authentically' Chinese, based on the fact it has faithfully preserved the Chinese written language,¹³²⁶ and there is an enduring tradition of Chinese literati art on the island, including calligraphy and ink painting, the latter of which has noticeably become more prominent in cross-strait exhibitions. The KMT's emphasis on Taiwan's *Chinese* cultural heritage contrasts strikingly to the former DPP President Chen Shui-bian's emphasis on Taiwan's *Austronesian* roots and aboriginal culture, marking a paradigmatic shift in Taiwan's identity discourse.

Under Ma's leadership, the KMT has officially implemented several new cultural initiatives designed to foster stronger cross-strait relations and promote mutual understanding. These include encouraging increased academic and cultural exchange, and introducing Chinese content in television, film and other media in Taiwan. For its part, the Chinese government strongly supports these moves for greater cultural integration and has proposed a 'Cross-Strait Culture Cooperation Agreement' to introduce 'institutional mechanisms' and 'make both sides understand each other better.'¹³²⁷ In an

¹³²⁵ Ma's Inauguration Address, 2008 (online). It is worthy to note that this idea of a shared Chinese heritage was also curatorially articulated in the 1998 Taipei Biennial, *Site of Desire*, discussed in Chapter Two, which was presented at the TFAM during Ma's tenure as Mayor.

¹³²⁶ Taiwan continues to use Chinese original complex characters rather than simplified ones used in China since the Cultural Revolution. However, Ma's government has been accused of 'double standards' given that it has changed Taiwan's Chinese Romanisation system from Wade Giles to *pinyin*, making it consistent with China's. Mo Yan-chih, 'Ma Accused of Double Standard over Language', *Taipei Times*, 19 June, 2011, p.3.

<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2011/06/19/2003506160> (accessed 12/10/2011).

¹³²⁷ Ko Shu-ling, 'Officials Propose Taiwan, China Cultural Exchanges', *Taipei Times*, 7 Sept. 2010, p.1. <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2010/09/07/2003482290>; *Taiwan News*, 'PRC Pushes Integration of Taiwan Culture', 7 Sept. 2010, p.6.

editorial widely circulated within Taiwan's visual art field, the Editor of the (English language) *Taipei Times* expressed his scepticism about China's motives, claiming that these cross-strait cultural initiatives are being used as 'a weapon' by the Chinese government to 'impose a Chinese cultural template on Taiwan', which he feared 'could succeed in eroding Taiwanese cultural identity'.¹³²⁸ Specifically, the journalist was alluding to a remark made by a Chinese official who observed, 'all this [cultural exchange has] greatly enhanced the acceptance of the Chinese nation and Chinese culture by our Taiwan compatriots'.¹³²⁹

The extent of the Chinese government's influence over cultural policy in Taiwan is difficult to gauge, but it is indisputable that culture is being used as a form of 'soft power' by governments in Taipei and Beijing to promote cross-strait relations. Based on a principle of 'co-option' rather than 'coercion', soft power is now widely recognised and accepted as an effective instrument for peaceful communication and diplomacy between nation-states.¹³³⁰ Politicians and cultural officials both in Beijing and Taipei have openly declared their support of the deployment of soft power and have acknowledged the importance of culture in this exercise.¹³³¹ Since 2008, there has been a rapid

http://www.etaiwannews.com/etn/news_content.php?id=1367488&lang=eng_news&cate_img=46.jpg&cate_rss=news_Editorial (accessed 24/10/2011).

¹³²⁸ Michael Cole, 'Beijing sees Culture as a Weapon', *Taipei Times*, 5 Mar. 2010, p.8.

<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2010/03/05/2003467197> (accessed 13/10/2011).

¹³²⁹ Cole, 'Beijing sees Culture', *Taipei Times*, 2010, p.8, (online).

¹³³⁰ According to Joseph Nye, who is accredited with the invention of the term in the 1980s, 'soft power' is one of the 'primary currencies' of international diplomacy today. See Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Perseus Press, Oxford, 2004. For further discussion on this concept see 'Joseph Nye on Soft Power', *Big Ideas*, ABC Radio, 7 May 2012 see <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/bigideas/stories/2012/05/07/3494634.htm> (accessed 8/7/2012).

¹³³¹ For media reports on the ways China and Taiwan respectively have referred to and use 'soft power' see Murray Whyte, 'How China is Using Art (and Artists) to Sell Itself to the World', *Toronto Star*, 12 Dec. 2009. <http://www.thestar.com/news/insight/article/737359>; and for a commentary on China's use of soft power in relation to exhibitions see Miriam Cosi, 'Soft Side to Chinese Diplomacy', *The Australian*, 24 Sept. 2011.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/opinion/soft-side-to-chinese-diplomacy/story-e6frg6zo-1226144285024> (accessed 4/12/2011). In Taiwan the Council for Cultural Affairs (CCA) (now Ministry of Culture) declares its 'primary aim is to cultivate the nation's soft

acceleration of exhibition exchanges between museums in Taiwan and China. Most remarkably, the National Palace Museum in Taipei, whose collection the KMT had for decades so closely guarded from the so-called 'Communist Bandits', is now engaged in collaborations with its Chinese counterpart, the National Palace Museum in Beijing. After sixty years of civil war and cross-strait rivalry, these two museums held their first joint exhibition in Taipei in 2009, an event that was extensively reported in the media.¹³³² Symbolically, a painting that had been divided into two and held in museums on both sides of the Taiwan Strait was 'reunited' and shown for the first time at the National Palace Museum in Taipei in June 2011.¹³³³ Of course, there are complex legal issues underpinning these bilateral exhibition exchanges, especially regarding ownership, and many of these issues remain unresolved.¹³³⁴ In the contemporary art field, museum exchanges have also become commonplace

power' see www.english.cca.gov.tw/np.asp?ctNode=3900 (accessed 4/2/2012 - this site has since been removed); and in relation to the new Ministry of Culture, its newly appointed Director also refers to the importance of soft power. See *Taipei Times*, 'CCA Set to Focus on "Soft power"', 16 Feb. 2012, p.2.

<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2012/02/16/2003525617> (accessed 4/5/2012). For political references on the value of soft power see

http://www.taiwannews.com.tw/etn/news_content.php?id=1922387 (accessed 4/5/2012)

¹³³² A small selection of articles in the media on this event include: Chris Gill, 'Beijing and Taipei Aim to Overcome Historic Divide', *The Art Newspaper*, issue 220, 11 Jan. 2011.

<http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Beijing-and-Taipei-aim-to-overcome-historic-divide/22174> (accessed 12/6/2011); Cindy Sui, 'Historic 'Reunion' of Chinese Art', BBC News, 7 Oct. 2009 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8293674.stm> (accessed 13/7/2011); Andrew Jacobs, 'A Reunited Painting Stirs Big Thoughts in China and Taiwan', *New York Times*, 6 July 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/06/world/asia/06taiwan.html> (accessed 13/7/2011).

¹³³³ This painting which was created by Huang Gongwang was entitled 'Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains' (1350). In 1650 the painting was burned and divided into two. The smaller piece was held in the collection of the Zhejiang Museum in Hangzhou, China; and the larger piece, has been in Taiwan's National Palace Museum. See *Taipei Times*, 'Classic Chinese Painting Reunited After 400 Years', 2 June 2011.

<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2011/06/02/2003504772> (accessed 15/6/2011).

¹³³⁴ For example legal issues relating to ownership and the return of works are still not resolved. According to the Director of the National Palace Museum (NPM) until the Chinese government signs an agreement that grants immunity for any piece of art borrowed from Taiwan's museum it will not lend China's museums works from the NPM's collection. In regards to its partnership with Beijing's National Palace Museum Director Chou states that both museums have agreed to 'engage in substance without bringing up titles or legal issues', Chou Kung-shin, quoted in an interview with Yvonne Tan, 'The National Place Museum: Chou Kung-shin', *The Art Newspaper*, 31 Mar. 2012; Jacobs, 'A Reunited Painting', *New York Times*, 2011, (online); Sui, 'Historic "Reunion"', 2009, (online).

and these exhibitions will be discussed after I examine how the official opening up of cross-strait links impacted on Taiwan's art field more broadly.

The opening up of cross-strait links

Since 2008, when Ma was first elected President, many barriers that existed between Taiwan and China, some for more than sixty years, have been broken down and, in addition to these aforementioned cultural developments, other important reforms have also been introduced. These include a landmark economic and trade pact between the two governments, which has generated a significant increase in bilateral trade;¹³³⁵ the commencement of semi-official party-to-party dialogue between Taipei and Beijing; and the restoration of the so-called three links (transport, commerce and communication) pursuant to which direct cross-strait flights and shipping links have been introduced.¹³³⁶ These reforms have unequivocally brought both sides closer together, geopolitically and culturally.

For example, with the relaxation of travel restrictions and the introduction of direct flights to major cities in Taiwan and China, cross-strait commerce, tourism, education and cultural interaction have dramatically increased.¹³³⁷

¹³³⁵ The 'Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement' (ECFA) which was signed in June 2010 and was intended to reduce tariffs and commercial barriers on bilateral trade, banking and other business and investment operations between the two sides. Chu Yu-han, 'Navigating between China and the United States: Taiwan's Politics of Identity', in *Taiwanese Identity in the Twenty-first Century*, 2011, p.150. Also BBC News, 'Historic Taiwan-China Trade Deal Takes Effect', 12 Sept. 2010. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-11275274> (accessed 24/8/2011).

¹³³⁶ Originally these were limited to weekend charter flights. Previously, Chinese tourists travelling to Taiwan were only permitted entry in groups as there were concerns that, without supervision, they would overstay their standard fifteen days. However, in late June 2011 these restrictions were lifted and 'free independent travellers' (FITs) were allowed. Shelly Shan, 'First FITs Touch Down in Taiwan', *Taipei Times*, 29 June 2011, p.2. <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2011/06/29/2003506970>; and *Xinhua News*, 'First Batch of Individual Tourists Leaves Mainland For Taiwan' 28 June 2011. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-06/28/c_13953678.htm (accessed 27/6/2011).

¹³³⁷ Students from the Mainland are also now choosing to study in Taiwan. Cindy Sui, 'Taiwan Universities Accept Chinese Mainland Students', *BBC News*, 14 Apr. 2011. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13076233>; Cindy Sui 'Taiwan Election in

Given China's burgeoning economy, a significant proportion of this traffic is unidirectional, with more Taiwan citizens regularly travelling and/or relocating to China where some of the world's financial services and cultural industries are concentrated.¹³³⁸ In her discussion of East Asian transmigration, cosmopolitanism and the formation of 'flexible identities', Michelle Huang explains that China's economic progress and the fact that Taiwan and China have common linguistic and cultural backgrounds are the principal reasons that increasing numbers of Taiwan citizens are choosing to move to the Mainland,¹³³⁹ re-locations made easier by these cross-strait reforms.¹³⁴⁰

In the wake of Taiwan's business entrepreneurs, many local art galleries, artists and art professionals have also moved to China. As discussed in Chapter Two, by the late 1990s, interest in Taiwan's local art market was waning and, in line with global art trends, investment-minded art collectors, gallery dealers and curators were turning their attention to China and Chinese art. As an indication of the meteoric rise and popularity of Chinese art in the world, between 2004 and 2008, the prices for contemporary Chinese art increased by a massive 500 per cent and, notwithstanding the global recession, by 2010 China represented the second largest art market in the world, claiming a global

Focus at Key Cross-Strait Meeting', *BBC News*, 5 May 2011.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/mobile/13290650> (accessed 13/7/2011).

¹³³⁸ According to one media report, from 2009 until the end of April 2011, the total number of Chinese visiting Taiwan reached 2.2 million compared with 11.2 million people from Taiwan visiting the Mainland. Yvonne Su, 'Hu Frets Over Taiwanese Election', *Asia Times*, 4 Oct. 2011. www.atimes.com/atimes/China/MJ04Ad01.html (accessed 4/10/2011).

¹³³⁹ Tsung-yi Michelle Huang (Huang, Tsung-yi Michelle), 'The Cosmopolitan Imaginary and Flexible Identities of Global City-Regions: Articulating New Cultural Identities in Taipei and Shanghai', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2006, pp.482. DOI: 10.1080/14649370600849330 (accessed 2/3/2011). Huang and Wang Horng-luen both note that Shanghai is one of the most popular cities in China to which people from Taiwan migrate. See Wang, Horng-luen. 'How are Taiwanese Shanghaied', *positions* (special issue: 'Cultural State of Contemporary Taiwan'), vol. 17, issue 2, Duke University Press, 2009, pp.321-346. DOI: 10.1215/10679847-2009-001 (accessed 4/10/2011).

¹³⁴⁰ In addition to direct flights, the ECFA has not only introduced commercial concessions for bilateral trade, but it has also given companies from Taiwan access to China's service sectors including banking, insurance and hospitals. Chris Hogg, 'Taiwan and China Sign Landmark Trade Agreement', *BBC News*, 29 June 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10442557> (accessed 25/9/2011).

share of twenty-three per cent.¹³⁴¹ By 2008 'almost every major New York gallery [had] signed on a Chinese artist'¹³⁴² and, as one of the foremost Australian curators in Chinese art, Claire Roberts observes, this trend was global as the leading museums and galleries internationally were showing and promoting Chinese art.¹³⁴³ Seeking to compete with their Euro-American and Asian counterparts,¹³⁴⁴ and with the multitude of local galleries opening up in China, galleries from Taiwan including SOKA Art Centre (索卡藝術中心), Eslite Gallery (誠品畫廊), and Lin & Lin Gallery (大未來林舍畫廊) (formerly Lin & Keng Gallery), all established satellite galleries and/or art consultancies in China in the new millennium.¹³⁴⁵

Also lured by China's burgeoning art market, and its wealth of cheap materials, many mid-career and younger contemporary artists from Taiwan have also established temporary and permanent bases in Shanghai and Beijing.¹³⁴⁶ For

¹³⁴¹ Artprice, 'China', *The Contemporary Art Market in Asia* 2009/2010, artprice.com.au, pp.11-12; Clare McAndrew, 'TEFAF Art Market Report', in Marion Maneker, 'China 23; UK22, Art Market Monitor, 14 Mar. 2011. <http://www.artmarketmonitor.com/2011/03/14/china-23-uk-22/> (accessed 17/6/2011):

¹³⁴² Barbara Pollack, 'The Chinese Art Explosion' *Artnews*, Sept. 2008. http://www.artnews.com/issues/article.asp?art_id=2542 (accessed 14/6/2011 – this site has since been removed). Also see Richard Vine, Christopher Phillips, and Barbara Pollack, 'Money Talks Mandarin', *Art in America*, vol.95, no.3, Mar. 2007, pp.49-53.

¹³⁴³ Roberts refers to the *New York Times* (21-22 June 2008) edition of the 'International Life-Arts Guide' in which all seventeen exhibitions listed featured Chinese art (seven of which were contemporary). See Claire Roberts, 'Opening the Door: Contemporary Chinese Art Since 1978' in 'The Rise of Contemporary Chinese art', from 'The Festival of Ideas' University of Melbourne, June 2009. <http://www.themonthly.com.au/rise-contemporary-chinese-art-chaired-chris-mcauliffe-1792> (accessed 18/6/2011).

¹³⁴⁴ See Pollack, 'The Chinese Art Explosion', *Artnews*, 2008, (online). Vine et. al, 'Money Talks Mandarin', *Art in America*, 2007, p.50.

¹³⁴⁵ SOKA Art Centre was one of the first Taiwan galleries to open in Beijing in 2001 with other galleries following (several of these galleries previously represented Chinese artists in Taiwan). Lee Yali formerly managed Taipei's Longmen Gallery (see Chapter Two p.113 & fn.379) also moved to Shanghai in 2002 where she established an art consultancy. See <http://longmenartprojects.com/> (accessed 17/10/2011). In addition in 2006 the Taiwan auction house Ravenel also established a base in Beijing. <http://ravenel.com/article.php?id=600&lan=en#about> (accessed 17/10/2011).

¹³⁴⁶ Other Taiwan artists include Hung Tung-lu, who was one of the first artists to leave Taiwan during this period in search of a better future in China. Hung participated in fourteen solo and group exhibitions in China alone between 2004 and 2010, including in the 2004 Shanghai Biennale (see p.140) but he later returned to live in Taiwan. Other artists include

artists such as Michael Lin (林明弘),¹³⁴⁷ who now resides in Shanghai, China is a global and cosmopolitan art hub, a destination for leading international curators, gallerists, and artists. Reflecting on his motives for moving to Shanghai, Lin candidly remarks that one cannot compare a city such as Taipei with a mere four million people, to China's largest city, with a population exceeding twenty-three million.¹³⁴⁸ The sheer size of Shanghai's population, its economy and consumer markets, along with its cultural facilities and networks cannot, as the artist suggests, be matched by Taipei. Participating in exhibitions and residencies around the world, Lin and many other artists are transnational, and identify as 'world citizens'. As June Yip observes, with increased cross-strait contact, the 'Motherland' is being gradually being 'stripped of the rosy glow of nostalgia that memory, fantasy and official mythologies once created for it'.¹³⁴⁹ While older generations in Taiwan may continue to view China in nostalgic or oppositional terms - either as the sacred Motherland, or as an authoritarian and repressive force (depending on whether they conformed to KMT ideology or not), for Taiwan's younger, mobile and cosmopolitan generation, China holds no particular emotional or historical significance. China is no longer defined in dichotomous terms as 'the Other', but is viewed as an integral part of the world, with a burgeoning economy, markets and cultural opportunities, which Taiwan's citizens are eager to explore.

Remarkably, this more pragmatic and dispassionate view of contemporary China has also been embraced by some of Taiwan's traditionally pro-

Huang Chih-yang (黃致陽), Hsu Yu-chen and Cheng Tsai-tung (鄭在東) who reside in Beijing and Shanghai and are all represented by the aforementioned Hanart TZ Gallery in Hong Kong.

¹³⁴⁷ Michael Ming-hong Lin (林明弘) was mentioned in Chapter Seven pp. 349, 366, 403. He participated in the 2000 Taipei Biennial, and represented Taiwan in the Venice Biennale.

¹³⁴⁸ Lin's full response was, 'I came over to Shanghai to be close to my oldest son who moved here with my ex in 2006. [...] I don't think you need me to tell you what the difference is between living in a city of four million and one of twenty-three million or living in China as opposed to anywhere else in the world in our time.' Michael Lin, Email to the Author, 26 Sept. 2011.

¹³⁴⁹ Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan*, 2004, p.232.

independence supporters. Politically disillusioned and alert to the wealth of opportunities opening up in China, *bentuhua* advocates, including the aforementioned Ni Tsai-chin¹³⁵⁰ and Hsieh Su-chen (謝素貞) also independently moved to China in the new millennium to further develop their careers. After serving as Director of the Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, the artist and writer, Ni moved to Beijing where he became actively involved as an artist and writer in Beijing's art scene, collaborating with artist Cai Guo-Qiang (with whom he had worked in Taiwan),¹³⁵¹ and participating in a number of exhibitions.¹³⁵² While Ni eventually returned to Taiwan to take up an academic position, Hsieh Su-chen has remained in China where she works as a museum manager, curator and writer.¹³⁵³ As noted, from the late 1980s and early-mid 1990s, Hsieh was a strong supporter of Taiwanese artists whom she promoted in the galleries in which she worked.¹³⁵⁴ However, with the global rise of Chinese art, Hsieh became increasingly aware of the commercial limitations of exclusively promoting Taiwanese art, which, she claims, became increasingly expensive and parochial.¹³⁵⁵ After serving for several years as Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Taipei, Hsieh moved to Beijing in

¹³⁵⁰ On Ni and his article 'Western Art Made in Taiwan' see Chapter One pp.72-73.

¹³⁵¹ In 2001 Ni collaborated with Cai on the Under Museum of Contemporary Art (UMoCA) inaugural exhibition entitled 'Who is the Happiest'. This 'exhibition' was held, at the Colle di Val d'Elsa for Arte all'Arte 6. In addition, Ni wrote an article on Cai's project, also created under the UMoCA, in 2004-2005, entitled Bunker Museum of Contemporary Art (BMoCA), Kinmen Island, Taiwan, *18 Solo Exhibitions* (11 Sept, 2004 - 28 Feb, 2005). In 1998, when Ni was Director of the NMFA (then Taiwan Province Museum of Art) in Taichung he invited Cai, who was also a participant in the TFAM's *Site of Desire* (1998) to 'bomb' the museum - which, Cai claims, 'partially' led to Ni's resignation. The work was entitled *No Destruction, No Construction: Bombing the Taiwan Province Museum of Art*. See Cai's reference to Ni at Cai Guo-Qiang, colle di Valle d'elsa. <http://www.artellarte.org/aap/english/2005/quo-qiang/text.php> (accessed 20/6/2011).

¹³⁵² One of these exhibitions was curated by the aforementioned internationally renowned Chinese curator Li Xianting. See Ni Tsai-chin, 'Globalization and Contemporary Chinese art', *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, vol.2, June 2003, pp.99-104.

¹³⁵³ For example, Hsieh has curated exhibitions of works by Taiwan artists, Su Wong-shen and Li Ming-tse (entitled 'Post-Utopia' for Mountain Art Museum in 2010), along with several exhibitions by Chinese artist Cang Xin and an exhibition by Liu Qiushi.

¹³⁵⁴ See Chapter Four on Yang Mao-lin. Before moving to China, Hsieh worked in a number of art museums; including the Taiwan Gallery (a commercial art gallery in Taipei which she managed); and she was Director of the Mountain Art Culture and Education Foundation in Kaohsiung.

¹³⁵⁵ On Hsieh see Chapter Two (pp. 114-115) and Chapter Four p.210-211.

2006 and was appointed Executive Director of the new museum at the Central Academy of Fine Arts (中央美术学院, or CAFA) where she was purportedly the first person in the arts field from Taiwan to hold a position in an official Chinese agency.¹³⁵⁶ According to a Taiwan journalist, Hsieh and other art professionals from Taiwan are distinguished in China by their ability to 'act as a bridge between East and West', bringing to the Mainland their knowledge of Chinese 'literati' culture, along with their professional Western experience and expertise.¹³⁵⁷

It was perhaps less of a surprise to Taiwan's local art community when the aforementioned curator, Victoria Lu, also moved to China. As discussed in Chapter One, during the 1990s Lu had been publicly critical of the TFAM, its management practices, and of ways in which art was being politicised. Although Taiwan had embraced democratisation, she claims people were still discriminated against because of their family background and political views. As a *waishengren* (Mainlander), Lu describes how she was effectively driven out of Taiwan because her ethnicity and her political views were not aligned with prevailing Taiwanese pro-independence ideologies.¹³⁵⁸ She claims that under the leadership of the DPP-appointed TFAM directors, Chang Chen-yu (張振宇) and Lin Mun-lee (林曼麗),¹³⁵⁹ she was unable to further develop her curatorial career and thus had to leave Taiwan, at least temporarily. Lu states

I never had a chance to play an official role in Taiwan [as a curator] because I am the wrong colour [politically]. I never [was invited to] curate a Taipei Biennial or to do an international show for the Taiwan pavilion in Venice, for political reasons.... I am *waishengren* and come from the Greater China point

¹³⁵⁶ Liang-rong Chen (Chen Liang-rong), 'Invasion of the Taiwanese Culturati', *CommonWealth Magazine*, no. 359, 8 Nov 2006. <http://english.cw.com.tw/article.do?action=show&id=3242> (accessed 16/6/2011). In my last discussion with Hsieh before she left MOCA, she said she was intending to do a PhD at CAFA. Since this time, I have been unable to contact Hsieh or to confirm when she left CAFA but it was (circa) 2008.

¹³⁵⁷ Liang-Rong Chen, 'Invasion of the Taiwanese Culturati', *CommonWealth Magazine*, 2006 (online).

¹³⁵⁸ Although she was born in Taiwan, Victoria Lu's parents came from Shanghai with the KMT in the mid-1940s and she is classified as *waishengren*. Lu's uncle was purportedly Chairman of the right-wing pro-unification New Party (新黨) in Taiwan.

¹³⁵⁹ See Chapters One and Two on Chang and Lin.

of view...[at this time] people in the TFAM biennial office thought I do not represent Taiwan. This is discrimination...it is totally unfair [so] I had to leave.¹³⁶⁰

In 2000, Lu moved to China and worked in a number of private art museums in Shanghai and Beijing and curated several large contemporary art exhibitions, several of which included artists from Taiwan.¹³⁶¹ Widely travelled, well-connected and well-versed in English, Lu is hailed in the Western media as 'the first female art critic and curator in the Chinese contemporary art world', a title that is contestable but one that Lu unselfconsciously promulgates.¹³⁶² In 2011, Lu curated an exhibition for the Venice Biennale, and although this was an unofficial, independently organised event, it was nevertheless a major exhibition presenting works by Asian and Western artists.¹³⁶³ Having realised her ambitions, after this exhibition, Lu returned to live in Taiwan where she is now semi-retired.¹³⁶⁴ Commenting on the rise of the KMT to power, and the development of cross-strait relations, she observes 'now it is better [in Taiwan] because the blue camp [KMT] is in, but it was very serious before [under the DPP].'¹³⁶⁵ However, according to other members of Taiwan's art community, and particularly those who have remained in Taiwan and oppose

¹³⁶⁰ Victoria Lu, Interview with the Author, 2009, Taipei.

¹³⁶¹ After serving as curator and Artistic Director at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Shanghai, in 2007 Lu moved to Beijing where she was Founding Director of the private Moon River Museum.

¹³⁶² Lu also claims she was the first person to translate the concept of 'curator' into Chinese. Victoria Lu, Interview with the Author, 2009, Taipei. Also He Jianwei, 'Curtains in Venice - Victoria Lu to Step Down as Curator After Last Exhibition', *Beijing Today*, 20 May 2011. <http://www.beijingtoday.com.cn/tag/victoria-lu> (accessed 5/10/2011).

¹³⁶³ This exhibition entitled *Future Pass - From Asia to the World*, was a collateral event held during the 2011 Venice Biennale and featured over one hundred artists' works from across Asia and also from the West, including some artists from Taiwan, including Yang Mao-lin. In 2004, Lu curated another exhibition which was presented in MOCA Shanghai and MOCA Taipei, of works by Asian artists (including from Taiwan and China) which broadly explored the influence of animation, comics, and cartoons in visual art. See *Fiction Love: Ultra New Vision in Contemporary Art*, Contemporary Art Foundation, MOCA, Taipei, 2004; and on *Future Pass* see http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/bien/venice_biennale/2011/tour/future_pass/victoria_lu (accessed 12/12/2011).

¹³⁶⁴ Lu's husband also lives in Taipei.

¹³⁶⁵ Victoria Lu, Interview with the Author, 2009, Taipei.

the KMT's efforts to develop close relations with China, this is not necessarily the case as I discuss below.

Forging cross-strait links in the museological representation of art

Since Ma came to power in 2008 a new quota system has been implemented stipulating that a certain number of exhibitions by Mainland artists must be presented annually by Taiwan's art museums. While this quota system has been widely reported in the media, its terms remain unclear, and its existence is still refuted by some museum staff.¹³⁶⁶ However, the Taipei City Deputy Mayor and Culture Affairs Department Commissioner Lee Yong-ping (李永萍) has publicly defended the government's policy to promote cross-Strait relations in art, explaining that this museological re-orientation towards China is integral to the KMT government's new Mainland policy. She reportedly stated, 'I feel that in the past, we've had too little of an understanding of the Mainland. We've ignored [China] for too long. But now we need to face it.'¹³⁶⁷ In response, the visual art community has accused the government of using Taiwan's museums as instruments for cross-strait diplomacy, claiming that the 'professionalism and neutrality' of these museums is being undermined.¹³⁶⁸ Certainly, since 2008, there has been a significant increase in the volume of official communication and a rapid acceleration of exhibition exchanges between museums in Taiwan and China. As Edward Vickers rightly observes, 'museums [in Taiwan] are never going to be depoliticised'¹³⁶⁹ at least, I would argue, not until Taiwan's identity has been resolved *vis-à-vis* China. In his discussion on the impact of the rise of the KMT to power on museums generally in Taiwan, Vickers acknowledges that while there is greater 'scientific rigour', professionalism and increased public scrutiny of museums,

¹³⁶⁶ Chen Wei-zhen, 兼任文化殖民局的美術館—2009北美館策展規劃與反彈 ('A Return to Cultural Colonization in the 2009 Taipei Art Museum Exhibition Planning'), 21 Jan. 2010. <http://www.pots.com.tw/node/4198> (accessed 26/7/2010) (in Chinese).¹³⁶⁷ Frazier, 'Plight at the Museum', *Taipei Times*, 2007 (online).

¹³⁶⁷ Frazier, 'Plight at the Museum', *Taipei Times*, 2007 (online).

¹³⁶⁸ Hsu Wen-rei quoted in Frazier, 'Plight at the Museum', *Taipei Times*, 2007 (online).

¹³⁶⁹ Vickers, 'History, Identity, and the Politics', *China Perspectives*, 2010, p.106 (online).

political intervention has not ceased; in fact, some contend it has increased rather than diminished under Ma's rule.¹³⁷⁰

Amongst the exhibitions shown under the TFAM's quota system were two major solo exhibitions by contemporary Chinese artists Fang Lijun¹³⁷¹ and Cai Guo-Qiang presented in 2009; and a more recent exhibition of photographs by the artist Ai Weiwei, which opened in 2011.¹³⁷² The choice of these particular Chinese artists was, I argue, strategic and closely aligned with the KMT's key cultural policy objectives. Not only were these artists born on the Mainland,¹³⁷³ but they are also internationally acclaimed; moreover their Western credentials, and often less orthodox practices and behaviour certainly enhance their political and cultural appeal in Taiwan, serving to reinforce the island's democratic and international status. While the KMT promotes Taiwan and China's shared cultural traditions, it also underscores their ideological differences, based on the fact that Taiwan is a democracy and respects human rights. This was exemplified in a media statement made by President Ma Ying-jeou in relation to Ai Weiwei's exhibition held at the TFAM:

Since [June 4] 1989 [Tiananmen crackdown on reform protesters], I have personally paid close attention to China's human-rights issues; last year, I lent

¹³⁷⁰ For example, in an interview a TFAM informant (who wants to remain anonymous) stated s/he hoped the DPP would be elected in 2012 Presidential elections as during DPP-rule there was not as much political intervention in the TFAM's operation and management. Interview with the Author, TFAM, 2011.

¹³⁷¹ Fang Lijun's retrospective was entitled *Endlessness of Life: 25 Years Retrospective of Fang Lijun* and was shown at the TFAM from April to July 2009.

¹³⁷² Entitled *Ai Weiwei Absent* this exhibition opened at the TFAM in Oct. 2011 and closed Jan. 2012.

¹³⁷³ While some Western observers may question whether artists such as Cai Guo-Qiang, who emigrated to Japan in 1986 and lives in New York, fits this 'Chinese' criteria, as far as Taiwan's government is concerned, the fact he was born in China and has been officially endorsed by the Chinese government, as witnessed during the Beijing Olympic Games opening, qualifies him as 'Chinese'. Barry Schwabsky, 'Tao and Physics', *Artforum* (New York), vol. 35, no. 10, Summer, 1997, pp. 118-121; Caroline Turner, 'Cai Guo-Qiang: Portrait of Our Times', *Imaging Identity*, (conference paper), National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, 15-17 July 2010. Despite his more recent dissident status in China Ai Weiwei was also given official recognition in China when he was commissioned to work as a design consultant on Beijing's 'Bird's Nest' National Stadium, the main site of the 2008 Olympics.

support to [Chinese dissident artist] Ai Weiwei. Human rights play a very important role in cross-strait relations.¹³⁷⁴

Ai is renowned internationally as an artist and a political activist who has openly criticised the Chinese government's stance on democracy and human rights, and this exhibition, entitled *Absent*, opened at the TFAM only four months after he was released from detention in China (fig. 8.5). His incarceration, which lasted close to three months, sparked protests worldwide and generated significant media attention internationally and also in Taiwan where his exhibition acquired political significance.¹³⁷⁵ Not only was Ai's exhibition presented during the centenary of the Republic of China, but it also opened only months prior to the 2012 Presidential elections when Taiwan-China relations were at the forefront of national debate. The fact that the ruling KMT sanctioned this exhibition helped dispel some concerns that, at least temporarily, Taiwan's democratic status would be safe-guarded. Having said that, members of Taiwan's art community accused the KMT of not formally inviting Ai to Taiwan for the opening because it feared reprisals from

¹³⁷⁴ Kastner, 'Taiwan's Ma Plays it Cool', *Asia Times* (online). Also see a more recent public statement made by Ma Ying-jeou on China needing to learn from Tiananmen and improve its human rights record which Ma suggested would help to 'narrow the gap' between Taiwan and China. *AsiaOne News*, 'Taiwan Calls on China to Learn from Tiananmen', 3 June 2012. <http://news.asiaone.com/News/AsiaOne%2BNews/Asia/Story/A1Story20120603-350297.html> (accessed 4/6/2012).

¹³⁷⁵ For a more detailed account of Ai Weiwei's arrest see Geremie R. Barmé's article first posted in 'The China Beat' on 27 April 2010. <http://www.thechinabeat.org/?p=3371> (accessed 21/4/2012). For protests staged in Taiwan see 'Taipei Art Center Calls For Release of Ai Weiwei', *WantChinaTimes: Knowing China Through Taiwan*, 15 April 2011. <http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?id=20110415000069&cid=1101> (accessed 29/6/2011); Christine Lu, 'China's Ai Weiwei Gets "Absent" Exhibition in Taiwan', *Reuters*, 28 Oct. 2011. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/10/28/us-china-artist-taiwan-idUSTRE79R2ZH20111028> (accessed 30/10/2011).

the Chinese government; the fact Ai did not attend added poignancy to the exhibition title *Ai Weiwei Absent*.¹³⁷⁶

This exhibition was significantly smaller than, for example, Cai Guo-Qiang's earlier retrospective at the TFAM. It was relatively conservative, with local and international visitors to the exhibition noting the lack of politically-engaged work.¹³⁷⁷ The exhibition comprised a series of early black and white photographs that Ai created whilst living in New York; and for this exhibition the artist created a monumentally large installation, entitled *Forever Bicycles* made from more than 1,000 bicycles, which were stripped of their functionality and suspended in space (fig. 8.6). Although this particular installation made oblique references to socio-political issues in China and its official culture of conformity, in the rest of the exhibition there were few visual or textual references to more controversial issues relating to Ai's views of the Chinese government. Nevertheless, for the artist, the exhibition marked a political turning point, remarking 'if Taiwan really is a part of China, which is what the Chinese government claims, this will be my first ever exhibition in China. So far, I have not been permitted to exhibit here [in China].'¹³⁷⁸

¹³⁷⁶ This allegation was apparently supported by Ai Weiwei who stated in an interview with *Radio Taiwan International* that no attempt had been made by the exhibition organisers to invite him to the show's opening. However, one TFAM official states the museum did invite the artist but the artist was unable to attend. See Yan Juo-chin, 'Ma Urged to Extend Invitation to Ai Weiwei', *Taipei Times*, 29 Oct. 2011.

<http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2011/10/29/2003516963> (accessed 30/10/2011). For a longer transcription of the interview and on the politics surrounding Ai Weiwei's exhibition see Radio Taiwan, 'Ai Weiwei: Taiwan "Absent" From World Politics Because It Will Not Stand Up For Its Rights', <http://blog.rti.org.tw/english/2011/11/20/ai-weiwei-taiwan-absent-from-world-politics-because-it-will-not-stand-up-for-its-rights> (accessed 18/11/2011).

¹³⁷⁷ For a selection of some of these reviews see *Art Radar*, 'Political Spectre Looms Over Ai Weiwei Taiwan Exhibition – Round Up', 8 Feb. 2012. <http://artradarjournal.com/2012/02/08/political-spectre-looms-over-ai-weiwei-taiwan-exhibition-round-u/> (accessed 2/2/2012).

¹³⁷⁸ William Oliver, 'Ai Weiwei: The Age of Craziness', *Dazed Digital*, 22 June 2011. <http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/10560/1/ai-weiwei-the-age-of-craziness> (accessed 29/6/2011).

Cai Guo-Qiang was one of the first Chinese artists offered a solo exhibition at the TFAM. Opening in 2009, this exhibition entitled *Hanging Out in the Museum* (蔡國強泡美術館),¹³⁷⁹ was part of a touring exhibition and was supplemented by several new works, including *Strait* (2009) a massive granite sculpture that metaphorically mapped historical maritime routes across the strait between Taiwan and southern China.¹³⁸⁰ This exhibition proved to be one of the largest and most costly solo exhibitions held to date at this museum. According to one report, the total budget was twice that allocated to the Taipei Biennial.¹³⁸¹ The exhibition, which included three additional new works, and seven existing large-scale installations, along with his gun powder drawings and video projections, filled the cavernous spaces of the museum whose grey foyer was lit up by his spectacular series of exploding suspended cars (fig. 8.7).¹³⁸² In Taipei's dense urban metropolis *Hanging Out in the Museum* was extensively publicised and, over a thirteen-week period, purportedly attracted more than 22,000 people, representing one of the highest attendances at a contemporary art exhibition in Taiwan.¹³⁸³

Cai Guo-Qiang is a regular visitor to Taiwan,¹³⁸⁴ which he describes as, 'to a certain extent... my cultural home.'¹³⁸⁵ Growing up in the Chinese province of Fujian, from where many Taiwanese came, Cai speaks with a Minnan (閩南)

¹³⁷⁹ This exhibition entitled *Cai Guo-Qiang: Hanging Out in the Museum* opened at the TFAM in Nov. 2009 and closed in Feb. 2010.

¹³⁸⁰ For more information on this work see the artist's website:

<http://www.caiguoqiang.com/shell.php?sid=2>; or

<http://en.arttron.net/news/news.php?newid=91508> (accessed 20/4/2010).

¹³⁸¹ This exhibition's budget was estimated at \$NT80 million (approx \$US 2,500,524). Frazier, 'Plight at the Museum', *Taipei Times*, 2007, (online).

¹³⁸² The exhibition included three new works, and two gunpowder drawings, including one on the famous Taroko Gorge. Another, entitled *Night and Day* was created before a live audience in which the artist worked with a dancer from the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre from Taiwan.

¹³⁸³ Frazier, 'Plight at the Museum', *Taipei Times*, 2007, (online).

¹³⁸⁴ As discussed in Chapter Two (p.126) Cai was one of the participating artists in the 1998 Taipei Biennial and participated in two other shows in the same year in Taiwan.

¹³⁸⁵ Yang Ling-yuan, 'Cai Guo-Qiang, Enfant Terrible of Conceptual Art', *Taiwan Panorama*, Jonathan Barnard (transl.), Feb. 2010, p.110. http://www.taiwan-panorama.com/en/show_issue.php?id=201029902110e.txt&table=2&h1=Art%20and%20Culture&h2=Arts%20Administration (accessed 26/6/2011).

accent, shared by many Taiwanese. Cai was also educated in Japan as were many artists from Taiwan, particularly during the Japanese colonial period, and he now lives between New York and Beijing and is regarded in Taiwan as the emblematical 'world citizen'. Remarking on Cai's perceived status in Taiwan and internationally, the Beijing-based art critic, Philip Tinari, insightfully observes that,

In Taiwan [Cai] is regarded as a true-blooded hometown hero, a markedly different dynamic from Japan (where he was always seen as an exotic curiosity), the United States (a powerful interloper from a rising power), or Mainland China (an opportunistic returnee looking for both government approbation and Western accolades).¹³⁸⁶

As I have discussed elsewhere, however, Cai's 2011 solo exhibition at the TFAM sparked considerable criticism within the local visual art community, not because of the choice of the artist *per se*, but because of its cost and the alleged political and commercial agendas driving this exhibition.¹³⁸⁷ A local arts reviewer, David Frazier, writing in the *Taipei Times* identifies some of the key concerns expressed by the local arts community regarding this exhibition.¹³⁸⁸ First, there was purportedly a conflict of interest regarding the exhibition's key sponsor, Eslite Corporation, a retail group, which owns a high profile commercial gallery in Taipei, which was concurrently presenting an exhibition of this Chinese artist's work. Secondly, a controversy developed around the alleged relationship between the artist and the incumbent KMT President, Ma Ying-jeou whose daughter, Leslie Ma Wei-chung (馬唯中), has been working as Cai's assistant.¹³⁸⁹ Viewed in a broader context, these criticisms were a direct response to the quota system Ma's government implemented, and to the wider paradigm shift taking place in Taiwan's cultural institutions, which became increasingly China-focused and commercially

¹³⁸⁶ Philip Tinari, 'Cai Guo-Qiang: Hanging Out in the Museum', 1 Feb. 2010. <http://philtinari.com/writing/cai-guo-qiang-hanging-out-in-the-museum/> (accessed 10/11/2011)

¹³⁸⁷ Sophie McIntyre, 'Re-Orienting Taiwan: The China Factor in Contemporary Art from Taiwan', *Asia Art Archive (AAA Dialogue)*, Sept. 2010. http://www.aaa.org.hk/newsletter_detail.aspx?newsletter_id=889 (accessed 21/10/2011).

¹³⁸⁸ Frazier, 'Plight at the Museum', *Taipei Times*, 2007, (online).

¹³⁸⁹ Frazier, 'Plight at the Museum', *Taipei Times*, 2007, (online).

oriented.¹³⁹⁰ As already indicated, in the commercial gallery sector there was a conspicuous re-orientation towards China and Chinese art. Days prior to the closing of Cai's exhibition the city government's Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) opened a solo exhibition of works by the Chinese performance artist, Zhang Huan (张洵).¹³⁹¹ Although these exhibitions of Chinese art are often officially promoted as bilateral exchanges, according to artists such as Yao Jui-chung, they are in fact 'fake' exchanges since Mainland institutions have rarely reciprocated, at least to the same extent, in the presentation of individual Taiwan contemporary artists' works.¹³⁹²

The first official bilateral exchange exhibition organised by the TFAM was *The Odyssey of Art in Taiwan 1950-2000* (台灣美术发展),¹³⁹³ which opened at the National Art Museum of China (NAMOC) in Beijing in September 2006. In return, NAMOC presented *The Blossoming of Realism: The Oil Painting of Mainland China Since 1978* which opened two months later at the TFAM. These were officially endorsed exhibitions presented in conjunction with the 'Cross-Strait City Arts Festival', an event co-sponsored by the Taipei and Beijing municipal governments and held in both cities. In the exhibition catalogue, the TFAM Director, Huang Tsai-lang (黃才郎) pointedly remarks that this was the first 'equal' exchange between art museums on either side of the Taiwan

¹³⁹⁰ Shao, 'New Forms of Sponsorship', *Asia Art Archive*, (online).

¹³⁹¹ MOCA has presented additional exhibitions from China, including a major survey exhibition by the digital media artist Feng Mengbo in 2003; an exhibition curated by Zhang Qing in 2007 of Chinese art entitled *Infantization*; and in 2010 MOCA's curator Mabel Lee curated a show of works by Taiwan's younger generation artists that travelled to Shanghai and to Beijing's Today Museum.

¹³⁹² Yao Jui-Chung quoted in Frazier, 'Plight at the Museum', *Taipei Times*, 2007, (online). Exhibitions of more traditional or modernist local artists' works, such as by Hsi Te-chin, Li Chun-sheng and the Eastern (*Tung fang*) Art Group have, however, been shown in China including several organised by the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts. See Chiu Kun-liang, 'Anticipating an In-depth Cross-Strait Dialogue', in *Post Martial vs. Post '89*, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung, 2007, p.5.

¹³⁹³ Also called 'The Development of Taiwanese Art 1950-2000', 'Cross-Strait Artistic Exchange: Resuming the Chinese Dialogue in Contemporary Art', in *Taipei Fine Arts Museum*, TFAM, 2010, pp.42-3.

Strait.¹³⁹⁴ Prior to this time, Taiwan art exhibitions travelling to China, such as the aforementioned *Visions of Pluralism*, were primarily privately organised exhibitions, which did not lead to reciprocal exchanges. Appropriating popular political rhetoric, both Huang and his counterpart, Fan Di'an (范迪安), Director of NAMOC, assert that this exhibition exchange will help 'strengthen mutual understanding' between the two sides.¹³⁹⁵

As the title suggests, *The Odyssey of Art in Taiwan 1950-2000* was essentially an historical survey exhibition, visually tracing Taiwan's artistic development, and it was chronologically structured into five periods, with fewer than a quarter of the works created after 1990. The exhibition featured 111 'representative' artists' works, selected mainly from the TFAM's collection and, like *Visions of Pluralism*, its objective was to reflect the development and culturally pluralistic character of Taiwan art. While both exhibitions shared a similar curatorial rationale, were of a similar size and featured many of the same artists, the latter exhibition included a more conceptually and aesthetically diverse range of works. For example, *The Odyssey of Art* included sculpture, installation, digital art and performance-based art, excluded from the former exhibition, which focused on painting.¹³⁹⁶ While artists Mei Dean-E, Yang Mao-lin and Wu Mali featured in both exhibitions, in *The Odyssey of Art*, their works were more explicitly politically engaged. Selected works by these artists included Mei Dean-E's work titled *Principle of Democracy* (1992),¹³⁹⁷ which depicted an open book (the *Three Principles of the People*) on to which the artist attached the hands of three small clocks, alluding to unification and ideological differences still requiring resolution between Taiwan and China. A

¹³⁹⁴ Huang Tsai-lang, 'Foreword', in *Odyssey of Art in Taiwan 1950-2000*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 2006, p.9.

¹³⁹⁵ Fan Di'an and Huang Tsai-lang 'Foreword (s)', in *Odyssey*, 2006, pp.7, 9.

¹³⁹⁶ Victoria Lu said that for logistical reasons *Visions of Pluralism* was limited to two dimensional works. Lu, 'Curatorial Worlds', in *Visions of Pluralism*, 1999, p.15.

¹³⁹⁷ In the exhibition catalogue this work has been mistranslated into English appearing as 'It is a Right for the People to Rebel' when it should be 'Principle of Democracy' (民權主義). Mei Dean-E, Email to the Author, 15 Sept. 2012.

work from Yang Mao-lin's *Made in Taiwan* series of a portrait of the Chinese Ming loyalist, Koxinga (Zheng Chenggong, 鄭成功) who famously escaped to Taiwan in the seventeenth century (see Chapter Four) was also included. Remarkably, Lee Tsai-chien's (李再鈺) famous red star sculpture (discussed in Chapter One), which the TFAM temporarily re-painted silver in the 1980s because it allegedly alluded to Communism, also featured in this exhibition.¹³⁹⁸

According to the TFAM, *The Odyssey of Art in Taiwan 1950-2000* was 'an objective' historical account of the development of Taiwan art from a 'thoroughly aesthetic perspective'¹³⁹⁹ (fig. 8.8). Notwithstanding its more adventurous approach, the museum curators emphasised the aesthetic qualities of the work over conceptual concerns. Like *Visions of Pluralism*, non-representational painting featured strongly with two categories being devoted to ink painting. Artists inspired by Chinese ink and literati-style painting, and calligraphic techniques, including Lo Ching (羅青), Yuan Jai (袁旃), Yu Peng (于彭), Hsu Yu-jen (許雨仁), and Huang Chih-yung (黃致陽), whose works had featured in the former exhibition were also included in *The Odyssey of Art in Taiwan*. Given their emphasis on history, aesthetics and ink painting, these exhibitions were clearly designed to appeal to Mainland audiences whose penchant for literati-style painting had been carefully cultivated by Taiwan's government in an effort to reinforce a sense of common culture between Taiwan and China.

A year later, in 2007, the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (NTMFA) in Taichung presented a major exhibition entitled *Post Martial Law vs. Post-'89: The Contemporary Art in Taiwan and China* (後解嚴與後八九：兩岸當代美術對照) (fig. 8.9).¹⁴⁰⁰ Curated by the local independent curator and

¹³⁹⁸ See Chapter One p.55-56.

¹³⁹⁹ Huang, in *Odyssey*, 2006, p.9.

¹⁴⁰⁰ Why this exhibition was presented by this museum in central Taiwan (which is funded by the central government), and not by the TFAM (which is a municipal art museum) is unclear

art critic, Hu Yung-fen,¹⁴⁰¹ this was a landmark exhibition because it was the first official exhibition that not only brought together and juxtaposed works by leading contemporary artists from Taiwan and China but also explicitly engaged in political themes. According to the exhibition title, *Post Martial Law vs. Post-'89* centred on two key events: the lifting of martial law in Taiwan and the Tiananmen student protests. These two events, which occurred within two years of each other, are widely viewed as defining episodes, at least symbolically, within Taiwan and China's political, socio-economic and cultural trajectories. As such, they offered a platform for comparison as well as a common point of entry into this large and multifaceted exhibition.

The central objective of *Post Martial Law vs. Post-'89* was curatorial engagement in cross-strait dialogue aiming, as the representative government official declared, 'to bridge the gap, remove the biases and enhance mutual understanding'¹⁴⁰² between Taiwan and China. Encompassing ninety-three works by twenty-two artists, including thirteen from Mainland China¹⁴⁰³ it featured a wide range of media and focused on the nexus between history, politics and art on both sides of the Strait. Importantly, the majority of works in this exhibition were created during the late-80s and 1990s, a period of significant political and social upheaval, when democratisation began to take root in Taiwan, and when the conflicting forces of the 'Open Door' policy and the Tiananmen massacre were experienced in China. The exhibition was divided into two overarching themes, 'History, Culture and Politics' and 'The Individual, Life and the Environment'. Organised into five further sub-themes, it explored local and global issues relating to history, politics, environmental degradation, the impact of technology and consumerism in both Taiwan and

but it could be argued that the 'national' status of this museum in Taichung accords it greater status. Having said that, this exhibition received most funding from private sponsorship.

¹⁴⁰¹ See Hu on p.204.

¹⁴⁰² Chiu Kun-liang (Minister of Council for Cultural Affairs), 'Preface-Anticipating an In-depth Cross Strait Cultural Dialogue', in *Post Martial Law vs. Post-'89*, NTMFA, 2007, p.5.

¹⁴⁰³ This number of works includes individual works which were part of a series. Most artists were represented by more than one work.

China. While acknowledging these artists' differing 'historical backgrounds' and 'cultural sensibilities', the curator clearly set out to highlight the common links between these artists' works, which, she claimed 'expressed similar concerns' and 'subjective emotions'.¹⁴⁰⁴ It is my contention, however, that beyond the first section of the exhibition, these connections were not visually apparent. In only two of these sub-groups, works by artists from Taiwan were exhibited alongside those by Chinese artists; and in the remainder of the exhibition works from Taiwan and China were mainly segregated.

Conceptual and artistic interests shared by some of the participating Taiwan and Chinese artists were most apparent in the first section of this exhibition, which displayed some of the most politically charged works. Under the first theme, 'History, Culture, Politics', this section was entitled 'Hasten to the Rising Sun and Show Strength: Political Statements' and comprised two adjoining rooms. Here, several works by Taiwan artists Wu Tien-chang, Yang Mao-lin, Wu Mali, and Ni Tsai-chin, were juxtaposed against works by Chinese artists, Wang Ziwei (王子衛), Wang Guangyi, Xu Yihui (徐一暉), and Yu Youhan. In the first room, Wu Tien-chang and Yang Mao-lin's bold and politically inspired neo-expressionist paintings from the 1980s and early 1990s were displayed alongside the equally visually powerful paintings by Chinese Political Pop artists Wang Guangyi, Yu Youhan and Wang Ziwei's (all of whom were represented in the aforementioned 1993 exhibition *New Art from China: Post-1989*) (figs. 8.10 & 8.11).

Viewing Wu Tien-chang's monumental portraits of Chiang Ching-kuo and Mao Zedong (from his *Four Eras* series, 1989-1990)¹⁴⁰⁵ against Wang Guangyi's gridded black and white sequence of portraits of Chairman Mao Zedong (1988), one was struck by the primacy of painting and the popularity of

¹⁴⁰⁴ Hu Yung-fen, 'Post-Martial Law vs. Post-'89: The Contemporary Art in Taiwan and China', in *Post Martial Law vs. Post-'89*, 2007, p.36.

¹⁴⁰⁵ Wu's *Four Eras* series is discussed in Chapter One p. 92.

political iconography, which was most evident in these artists' works. Furthermore, comparing Wang Guangyi's heroic caricatures of China's revolutionary soldiers from his *Great Criticism* series (2005) with Yang Mao-lin's exaggerated and equally defiant figures with clenched fists (from his *Behaviour and Games Playing* series 1988) revealed similar stylistic concerns. The conceptual and aesthetic resonances between Wu Mali's politically ironic and deteriorating cake-installation depicting the KMT flag entitled, *Love to the Highest Point* (1990/2007) (discussed in Chapter Five), and Xu Yihui's small mound of porcelain *Little Red Books* (2002), displayed close to Wu's installation, were also teased out (fig. 8.12). Drawing on political symbolism, paradox, and humour the juxtaposition of these works exemplified common connections between these artists from Taiwan and China.

However, beyond these emboldened and satirical expressions of resistance, the relationship between other works from Taiwan and China was, as stated, less perceptible in the rest of the exhibition. In the subsequent section, entitled 'The Search for the Self in Origins: The Subject of Culture and Identity', only two artists' works from China (Yu Youhan and Wang Ziwei) were included amongst a total of twenty-three works.¹⁴⁰⁶ In her essay accompanying this section, the curator focused exclusively on Taiwan and on the rise of Taiwan-centric identity consciousness, subjectivity, and gender issues during the 1990s. Several works by Mei Dean-E featured in this section, including his earlier installation *Silk Road Broche China* (1993) shown alongside his more recent *Identity* series (2007); these were interpreted as 'classic examples' of 'the anxiety' underlying Taiwan's struggle for national identity and international recognition.¹⁴⁰⁷ More recent works by the aforementioned Wu Tien-chang and Yang Mao-lin were also included in this section, as were two

¹⁴⁰⁶ This section included artists Yu Youhan, Wang Ziwei, Mei Dean-E, Chen Chieh-jen, Wu Mali, Wu Tien-chang and Yang Mao-lin.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Hu Yung-fen, 'The Search for the Self in Origins: The Subject of Culture and Identity', in *Post Martial Law vs. Post-'89*, 2007, p.102.

socially-engaged installations by Wu Mali who, remarkably, was the only female artist included in this exhibition.¹⁴⁰⁸

In the following part of the exhibition, entitled 'Faces Reflect Social Reality: Nameless Icons', presented under the second overarching theme, 'The Individual, Life and the Environment', the curator focused both on artists' emergent individualism and on broader 'humanistic concerns'.¹⁴⁰⁹ Compared to the first section, this part of the exhibition comprised predominantly more recent works that highlighted the pluralistic and hybrid nature of contemporary art in Taiwan and China. Focusing on this disparate body of works, it appears that the curator abandoned all attempts to find commonalities between artists' works from both sides of the Strait. In one section, the curator focused exclusively on Chinese artists from the Cynical Realist painting movement in China while unrelated works by internationally acclaimed artists including Fang Lijun, Yue Minjun (岳敏君), Zhang Xiaogang (张晓刚) and Liu Wei (刘韡) were also displayed. In another section focusing on the rise of environmental consciousness and themes relating to global warming and the urban-rural divide in China, works by Taiwan artists dominated. In the final section on consumerism, all but one artist was from China.¹⁴¹⁰

While the declared purpose of this exhibition was to engage in cross-strait dialogue through a comparison of artists' works, Taiwan and Chinese artists' works were mostly set apart, thus effectively quashing opportunities for artistic comparison and dialogue. According to the curator, it is impossible to

¹⁴⁰⁸ The lack of representation of women artists in this exhibition was raised by some participants in the symposium organised in conjunction with the exhibition. When I later asked the curator why there were so few female artists in the exhibition I received no response.

¹⁴⁰⁹ Hu Yung-fen, 'Faces Reflect Social Reality: Nameless Icons', in *Post Martial Law vs. Post-'89*, 2007, p.154.

¹⁴¹⁰ The only Taiwan artist in this section was Lee Ming-jong (which included Fang Lijun, Yue Minjun, Yu Youhan, Qi Zhilong, and Xu Yuhui).

'judge the artistic accomplishments of both sides by using only one side's value system.'¹⁴¹¹ Whether this remark was intended to justify the lack of curatorial and artistic dialogue between works in the majority of this exhibition is unclear, but it does not clarify why there was such a discrepancy between the exhibition's aims and its overall display. Having said that, efforts were made by the museum and curator to generate cross-strait dialogue by bringing artists from Taiwan and China together in a two-part symposium held in conjunction with this exhibition.¹⁴¹²

This symposium explored the impact of the lifting of martial law in Taiwan and post-'89 events in China, along with the effects of globalisation and transnationalism in the visual arts in Taiwan and China. Local art curators/critics and artists, including the aforementioned Wang Jia-ji, Ni Tsai-chin and Chen Chieh-jen, questioned whether the impact of the lifting of martial law in Taiwan was as pivotal or as progressive as the curator had claimed in this exhibition. Wang and Ni pointed out that, in terms of artistic development these events were essentially symbolic, as there were avant-garde underground art movements in Taiwan and China prior to 1987 and 1989. This view is shared by many artists, critics and historians in Taiwan.¹⁴¹³ The artist, Chen Chieh-jen argued that Taiwan was still effectively under martial law since its actions and future were largely controlled by external powers, specifically by the US and, increasingly China.¹⁴¹⁴ 'On the surface,

¹⁴¹¹ NTMFA, *Post Martial Law vs. Post-'89*, (exhibition pamphlet), 2007.

¹⁴¹² Although I saw the exhibition, I was unable to attend the Symposium. The following account is therefore based on feedback from attendees, media reports (in Chinese), and conference proceedings (though these include only a small selection of articles, mostly historical, by several academics and the curator and included no artists' responses).

¹⁴¹³ For example, see Hsiao, 'Changes in the Subject Matter', in *Symposium of Artistic Trends*, 1992, pp.145-185 (in Chinese with an English summary). Also, in the post-martial law symposium, Mei Dean-E remarked that further research was required to determine the real effects of martial law on the arts. Chang Ching-wen, 政治與藝術的交互作用：記（後解嚴與後八九一兩岸當代藝術家座談會）（'The Interaction of Politics and Art: Record of Post-Martial law vs Post-'89 Conference of Contemporary Artists Across the Strait'），藝術家（*Artist*），no. 384, May 2007, p.347 (in Chinese).

¹⁴¹⁴ This idea was further explored by the artist his series *Empire Borders*（帝國邊界）（2009）discussed in Chapter Seven pp.373-374.

martial law has been abolished in Taiwan. However, the Cold War ideology and attitude that looks down on the Third World never changes', Chen stated.¹⁴¹⁵ Seeking to engage in artistic dialogue, Chen proposed that only outside the confines of the museum, might a genuine discussion on politics and cross-strait relations meaningfully develop, implying that museums were essentially instruments of the state.¹⁴¹⁶

Responding to this debate, guest speakers and participating Chinese artists, Zhou Chunya (周春芽) and Yu Youhan, reminded delegates that China was still relatively closed to the outside world in the late 1980s. After the Tiananmen incident in 1989, many artists left China;¹⁴¹⁷ at the same time, Taiwan's artists were returning from overseas to the island, which had embraced democratisation. These political and artistic developments were the main points of discussion in this symposium, which explored both the differences and the commonalities between the artistic trajectories of Taiwan and China. The exhibition and symposium were viewed principally as a valuable opportunity to engage with and learn more about China and, as local critics acknowledged, they highlighted the need for further research and cross-strait cultural engagement.¹⁴¹⁸ As the local art critic, Chang Cheng-lin (張正霖) observes, after more than sixty years of 'estrangement', there is a paucity of information and a lack of understanding of each others' histories and cultures. Although people in Taiwan are acutely aware of China's burgeoning economy

¹⁴¹⁵ Chen Chieh-jen quoted in Chang Cheng-lin, 尋覓對話—讀(後解嚴與後八九—兩岸當代美術對照)一展 ('Seeking Dialogue- Reading the Exhibition Post Martial Law vs. Post-'89: Contemporary Art Across the Strait', 藝術家 (*Artist*), no. 384, May 2007, p.351 (in Chinese).

¹⁴¹⁶ Chen Chieh-jen, Conversation with the Author, 2007, Taipei. Also see Chang Ching-wen, 'The Interaction of Politics and Art', *Artist*, 2007, p.346 (in Chinese).

¹⁴¹⁷ Chang Ching-wen, 'The Interaction of Politics and Art', *Artist*, 2007, pp.344-345 (in Chinese).

¹⁴¹⁸ Lee Feng-ming, 藝術承載政治的時代面貌—國立台灣美術館(後解嚴與後八九—兩岸當代美術對照)開幕 ('The Face of a Period when Art Took on Politics—The Opening of 'Post Martial Law vs Post '89—Contemporary Art Across the Strait' at the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts'), 藝術家 (*Artist*), no. 384, May 2007, pp.340-343 (in Chinese).

and its art market, Chang claims that knowledge of China's art history, particularly since the 1980s, is severely limited in Taiwan.¹⁴¹⁹

Notwithstanding the lack of cross-strait dialogue in the exhibition, *Post Martial Law vs. Post-'89* marked a critical turning point in cross-strait relations, politically and culturally. Less than a decade before, political tensions between Taiwan and China, and restrictions on cross-strait travel had significantly impeded opportunities for cross-strait cultural exchange, at least on an official level. For the first time in a major public art museum, contemporary artists' works from Taiwan and China were brought together and juxtaposed, offering audiences a valuable insight into concurrent cultural developments in Taiwan and China. The exhibition provided a platform for open and equal communication and exchange between artists, curators and scholars from Taiwan and China. It is important to note, however, that when *Post Martial Law vs. Post-'89* travelled to China, the exhibition was renamed *Compare-Contrast: Contemporary Art in Cross-Strait* (sic) (兩岸當代对照阅读) and political references to martial law and Tiananmen¹⁴²⁰ were removed.¹⁴²¹

As indicated, with increased cultural exchange, issues of censorship have become more commonplace in the representation of Taiwan art in China, and they inevitably raise broader questions regarding Taiwan and China's relationship, and their differing ideological perspectives on freedom of expression. In more recent years, art museums, including the TFAM and NTMFA have sent several other exhibitions to China,¹⁴²² and it appears that

¹⁴¹⁹ Chang Cheng-lin, 'Seeking Dialogue', *Artist*, 2007, pp.348-351 (in Chinese).

¹⁴²⁰ In the exhibition catalogue the Tiananmen massacre was referred to as 'post-'89' (後八九), or the 'Tiananmen incident' (天安門事件), in order, presumably, to avoid antagonising the Chinese government. It was officially referred to in English by the Minister of the Council for Cultural Affairs as the 'Tiananmen Square protests'. Chiu, 'Preface', in *Post Martial vs. Post '89*, 2007, p.5.

¹⁴²¹ Several attempts have been made to contact the Curator to obtain further details about the selected works, display and reception to the exhibition in China but I received no response.

¹⁴²² For example, in 2009 the NTMFA presented an exhibition entitled *Speak, Describe: Cross-Strait Contemporary Art Exhibition in China* that was presented at NAMOC after showing in

ensorship itself is not a sufficient deterrent or justification for these museums to disengage with China. With this intensification of cross-strait cultural exchange, the question must also be raised whether Taiwan's closer relationship with China has advanced or impeded the development of art in Taiwan where the enthusiasm for China and Chinese art appears to overshadow local interests.

The impact of China's global economic and cultural ascent on Taiwan, and specifically on the representation of art and identity in museological discourses, are the central issues explored in this chapter. These case studies have highlighted the different ways in which museums, curators, and some artists have, to varying degrees, contributed towards opening-up and facilitating cross-strait interaction. It demonstrates how culture, and visual art more specifically, has been used as a vehicle by governments on both sides of the Strait to promote dialogue and cooperation between Taiwan and China. Whether these exhibitions have helped build mutual trust and understanding between the two sides is debateable, but they have, without doubt, raised the level of cultural awareness, and helped bridge the divide that has existed for more than sixty years between Taiwan and China. I have argued that these exhibitions present a view of Taiwan that is essentially cosmopolitan, simultaneously acknowledging Taiwan's local and global cultural influences, while emphasising Taiwan and China's shared cultural values. This cultural imaginary has offered a strategic conduit through which Taiwan can engage

Taiwan. This exhibition was co-curated by the former NTMFA Director, Ava Hsueh and the NAMOC Director Fan Di'an. The exhibition focused on the concept of dialogue and language, examining the role of artists as visual narrators, and reflected on broader historical, social, environmental and other issues. In the exhibition publicity the organisers state, 'We hope to encourage communication between artists from Taiwan and China and find rapport on this exposition platform, giving the dialogue across the Strait a positive and constructive spin'. See *Taiwan Contemporary Art Link- News and Highlights*, 22 June 2009, <http://taiwancontemporaryart.com/comments.php?artid=352>; NAMOC-Exhibitions, http://www.namoc.org/en/Exhibitions/200907/t20090702_115635.html (accessed 17/10/2011).

peacefully with China without surrendering its claim to political self-determination and cultural freedom.

While the majority of these exhibition case studies have been government-sponsored initiatives, it has been the contention of this chapter that Taiwan's cultural engagement with China has not been exclusively politically driven. Lured by China's burgeoning economy, its global art market, and direct cross-strait linkages, this chapter demonstrates how China has become an increasingly attractive destination for an emergent generation of artists, gallerists and curators who do not view China in binary terms as 'the Other' but rather as a land of opportunity. I have argued that globalisation and the emergence of China on the world stage has given rise to an increasingly pragmatic and cosmopolitan outlook, which recognises the fluidity and multiplicity of notions of place and belonging; and the limitations of a singular, coherent and integrated identity based on territorially-bounded notions of national identity.

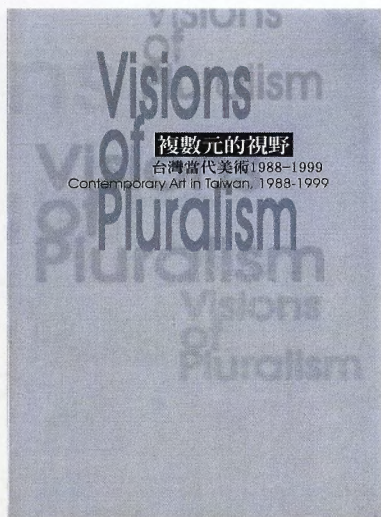
Having said this, while the majority of Taiwan's citizens may define themselves in cosmopolitan terms as 'world citizens', and seek to engage with China economically and culturally, they are not willing to relinquish their democratic freedoms totally. Issues relating to Taiwan's self-determination and political future remain at the forefront of national debate. To what extent are Taiwan's citizens willing to yield to China and forego the democratic rights they value so highly? Essentially, what is the value and meaning of national identity and self-determination in Taiwan today, economically, politically and culturally? In Taiwan, both political parties¹⁴²³ are endeavouring to strike an accord, seeking

¹⁴²³ Under the more moderate leadership of Tsai Ing-wen and now Su Tseng-chang (elected in May 2012), the opposition DPP is moving away from its traditional pro-independence stand promoted by the former President Chen Shui-bian and is embracing a more 'open' and 'flexible' approach towards China, announcing it will replace 'past conflicts with conversation'. Jenny W. Hsu, 'Taiwan Ex-Premier Su Tseng-cheng Elected Head of Opposition Party', *The Wall Street Journal*, 27 May 2012.

to maintain Taiwan's economic growth, international visibility, and peaceful relations with China, while also safe-guarding Taiwan's democracy. In China, Xi Jinping (习近平)¹⁴²⁴ has replaced the Communist Party leader, Hu Jintao and, although it appears there will be no change to Taiwan-China relations in the short term, only time will tell how this relationship will develop and impact on Taiwan. As this chapter has demonstrated, currently Taiwan's economic interests and its political aspirations are not closely aligned; and how long it is able to maintain the *status quo* with China, or what is also described as *de facto* independence, is the key question. How long will China tolerate Taiwan's lack of compliance; to what extent can Taiwan resist being drawn into China's powerful orbit; and what role might the United States play, if any, in Taiwan's future? And how will this impact on Taiwan's visual art field? While these questions remain unresolved, what is clear is that China will remain a focal point in Taiwan's national and cultural imagination in the foreseeable future.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303807404577430550417625084.html?mod=googlenews-wsj> (accessed 18/6/2012).

¹⁴²⁴ Xu was appointed General Secretary of the Communist Party at the end of its 18th National Congress in Beijing in November 2012, and he is expected to become China's President in 2013.



Figures 8.1 & 8.2 (top to bottom): *Visions of Pluralism* exhibition catalogue; Mei Dean-E, *Bat Flying out of Dragon Cave*, 1995, mixed media (in *Visions of Pluralism*)

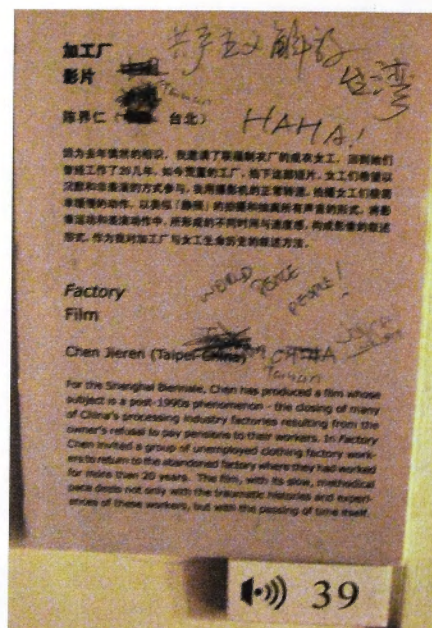


Figure 8.3: Graffitied label accompanying Chen Chieh-jen work (in the 2004 Shanghai Biennial)



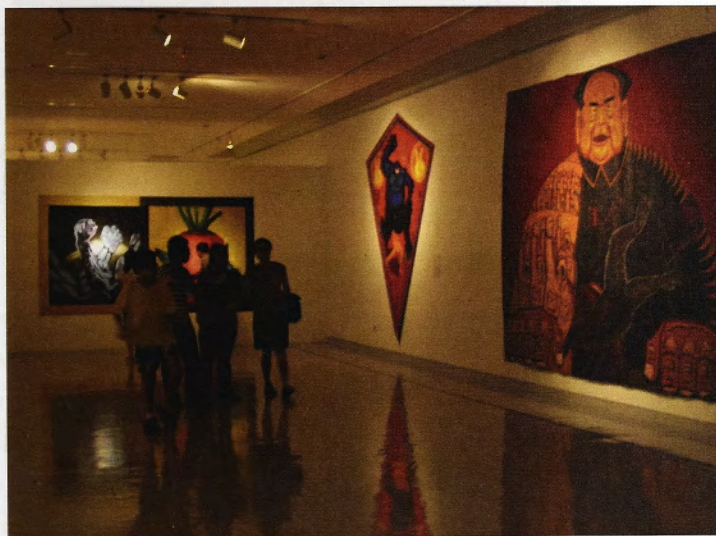
Figure 8.4: UN for Taiwan campaign (Taipei Main Railway Station)



Figures 8.5 & 8.6 (top to bottom): Ai Weiwei: *Absent* (exhibition display); Ai Weiwei, *Forever Bicycles*, 2011 (at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum)



Figure 8.7: Cai Guo-Qiang, *Inopportune: Stage One*, mixed media, 2009, (installation in progress at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum)



Figures 8.8, 8.9 & 8.10 (top to bottom): *The Odyssey of Art* exhibition catalogue; *Post Martial Law vs. Post-'89* exhibition catalogue; *Post Martial Law vs. Post-'89* exhibition display (with Wu Tien-chang's work in foreground)



Figures 8.11 & 8.12: (top) *Post Martial Law vs. Post-'89* exhibition display with Wang Guangyi's two works, *NIKE Great Criticism* and *The Different Ways We Face War* in the foreground; (bottom) Wu Mali's *Love to the Highest Point* and Xu Yihui's *Little Red Books* in the foreground

CONCLUSION

The overarching aim of this research has been to explore the role played by art in the formation and re-definition of Taiwan's national identity, which has been examined through the making *and* museological representation of contemporary art. Focusing on the period from 1987 until 2010, this study has examined the ways in which artists, curators and museums have responded to and contributed towards Taiwan's identity discourse. This has necessitated a critical investigation of the interrelationship between politics and art, and of the issue of artistic agency in the representation of Taiwan's identity. To this end, I have concluded that museums, curators and artists actively engaged in and critically responded to Taiwan's quest for identity in ways that have both supported and contested official discourses on the nation. Their motivations for engagement in this national identity discourse during the early-mid 1990s, and their waning interest in these issues by the late 1990s have been probed and analysed. This research is empirically-driven and has been significantly informed by my interviews with artists and art professionals in Taiwan, and by the academic and curatorial research I have undertaken in Taiwan's art field during these two decades.

As a nation-state without national sovereignty that struggles to define and assert its national identity and attract international recognition, Taiwan's political marginalisation has meant that art has played a crucial role in its quest for identity, calling attention to and representing the nation overseas. Art has been deployed by both political parties, by museums, curators and by some significant artists as a vehicle for national consciousness-raising and cultural diplomacy. This thesis demonstrates clearly that the Taipei Biennial and Venice Biennale, the two main exhibition case studies, have been crucial platforms for local and national governments to promote Taiwan's cultural achievements and its democratic and cosmopolitan identity to the international community. Both have firmly positioned Taiwan on the global art

map, and the Taipei Biennial has played an important role in bringing together the local and global as well as generating debate within Taiwan about its identity, relationship to the region and place within the world.

I have demonstrated that the TFAM, as the principal organiser of these biennials, and as Taiwan's premier public art museum, has played an instrumental role in the processes of national identity formation in Taiwan. Based on these and other exhibitions, this thesis has examined the ways in which the TFAM has contributed to this identity discourse, generating narratives and selecting and showcasing 'representative' artworks that emphasise Taiwan's cultural distinctiveness. The subtle but significant shift – from the national to the global – in the visual conceptualisation and representation of Taiwan's identity has been probed in relation to the two biennials and Taiwan's concomitant desire for national identity and international recognition. With the global rise of China and the warming of official cross-strait relations, the TFAM has more recently played an important facilitatory role in initiating and presenting exhibitions to promote cultural dialogue and co-operation with China (Chapter Eight). How effective these have been in developing mutual exchange and understanding is contestable but there is no doubt that art is being used by both governments across the Strait as a vehicle for soft power.

Understandably the extent of government influence over the TFAM has been difficult to establish with evidential certainty. Nevertheless, my research on the TFAM's governance and management, along with its exhibition programmes and curatorial agendas, points to the reality that politics, and more specifically national identity politics, have exerted a significant influence on the TFAM. However, this has been less prescriptive than an outcome of a close ideological alignment between politics and museological practice during the mid-1990s, when Taiwan's identity discourse peaked in visual art; this was

particularly the case when the traditionally pro-independence DPP won the seat of power in the municipal government.

Seeking to differentiate Taiwan from China, the DPP promoted Taiwan's Austronesian roots and its multicultural identity, a vision clearly articulated in the Taipei Biennial's *Quest for Identity* (1996) (Chapter One). Since 1998, the TFAM has been governed by the traditionally pro-unification KMT and, as a consequence, expressions and assertions of Taiwan national identity have become less pronounced with the TFAM focusing its attention on strengthening its international profile and connections (Chapter Two). However, that is not to say that the impact of political ideology on the TFAM has diminished; in fact, when the TFAM implemented the Chinese exhibition quota system introduced by the KMT, some critics questioned whether political intervention had, in fact, increased (Chapter Eight). In 2012, a new Ministry of Culture was established and the prominent and widely respected art critic and curator, Huang Hai-ming, was appointed TFAM Director. These are positive signs that national and local governments are responsive to the need to adopt a more considered, arms length approach towards the development of cultural policy and museum management.

The four artist case studies in this thesis show clearly the ways in which individual artists have played a critical role in the development of Taiwan's identity discourse, creating artworks that have promoted, questioned and challenged official discourses and prevailing perceptions of identity in Taiwan. Although their perspectives on and motives for engaging in Taiwan's identity discourse differ, each of these four artists actively engaged in the debates - as artists, writers and activists. While Yang Mao-lin was essentially the only artist who purposefully set out to promote Taiwan's national identity and sovereignty (Chapter Four), the case studies demonstrate how all four artists have sought to raise critical awareness within society of the politics and the roles of history, memory and myth in the construction of Taiwan's identity.

A central feature of Taiwan's identity discourse has been the relationship between the past and present and, as a result, the significance of the 'making' of Taiwan's history was a concern common to all four artists. While Yang Mao-lin set out to discover, re-write and memorialise the history of the nation, Wu Mali called attention to those who have been excluded or overlooked in the writing of these national histories (Chapters Four and Five). Mei Dean-E and Yao Jui-chung, on the other hand, deconstructed and parodied the politics and myths surrounding Taiwan's history and identity, highlighting its inherent paradoxes and its so-called absurdities (Chapters Three and Six). It is argued that these artists' alternative histories and counter-narratives significantly expanded and enriched Taiwan's identity discourse. On a global level, these four artists' works can also be viewed in a postmodern and postcolonial context, two parallel discourses which have attracted significant scholarly interest and influenced many Asian artists during this period (see Introduction). These four artists' works from Taiwan used their art as a vehicle to question, critique, and subvert notions of identity, difference, and authenticity, and prevailing systems of knowledge and power which are central to these two discourses.

The artists' case studies engender an expansive and in-depth understanding of the complex relationship between politics and art in national identity formation, offering also their personal insights into the 'ethnic' and artistic tensions between *bensheng* and *waisheng* artists, and between artists trained in Taiwan and overseas. Moreover, they reflect the fluid and changeable nature of national and individual conceptions of identity. From the late 1980s until the mid-late 1990s, these four individual artists engaged directly with national identity issues in distinctive ways through political parody, social activism, and through subjective and personal enquiry. However, during the first decade of the twenty-first century, each of these artists increasingly disengaged with national identity politics, as they began exploring broader issues that had

personal, artistic, and global significance. Undoubtedly, local and international economic forces, particularly in the art market, contributed towards this shift, but, it is also argued that artists had generally become tired of the parochial and divisive aspects of Taiwan's identity debate. Since the lifting of martial law, Taiwan had embraced democracy and freedom of speech, and identity issues had become part of the political and cultural mainstream. As Yang Mao-lin said to me during an interview in 2007, 'Taiwan had become Taiwanised(and) there was nothing to resist anymore'.¹⁴²⁵

The two decades following the lifting of martial law in 1987 were a transformative period when economic modernisation and increased freedom prompted an upsurge of Taiwan consciousness and national pride, which, I have argued, was manifest in the art field. This thesis has clearly demonstrated that Taiwan's quest for identity in art was principally politically motivated by democratisation, the desire to re-discover and re-present Taiwan's identity, and ideas of national self-determination. Importantly, it was also shaped by other domestic and international economic, social and cultural forces. Seeking to remain 'at the forefront of international trends', as former Mayor, Ma Ying-jeou, described it (see Chapter Two), during the late 1990s, Taiwan's identity was re-envisioned as both local and global, as a mix of Taiwanese, Japanese, Western and Chinese influence (Chapter Seven). The impact of globalisation and the rise of China paved the way for this paradigmatic shift from a Taiwan-centred discourse to a more inclusive and expansive local-global trajectory.

The historical and political role played by China in Taiwan's national identity discourse has been pivotal, as evidenced in the exhibition and artist case studies. By the end of the twentieth century, globalisation and, in particular, the growth of digital technology and mobility, along with China's economic and cultural global ascent, have had the greatest impact on changing conceptions of

¹⁴²⁵ Yang Mao-lin, Interview with the Author, 2007, Taipei.

identity. Furthermore, new generations of artists in Taiwan have grown up during a period of unprecedented freedom and prosperity, and many of them do not view identity in oppositional or national terms but rather in relation to the self and the world.

Based on the exhibition and artist case studies, I have demonstrated how prevailing conceptions of identity and nationhood in Taiwan have changed over the course of these two and more decades, from a Taiwan-centred focus to a global and transnational outlook that encompasses China. I have argued that this paradigmatic shift in visual art has paralleled broader economic and artistic developments in the region where Asian art has become increasingly popular and new markets and opportunities have opened up for artists from Taiwan. The rise of globalisation and the economic and cultural ascent of China have prompted the pragmatic realisation by Taiwan's art community that its vision must be expanded to explore new avenues and opportunities beyond the realms of the nation.

The focus of this study on national identity issues in art from Taiwan has much broader applicability, serving as a model case study for broader regional developments in visual art. With the global emergence of Asia in the late twentieth century, new and renewed nationalisms, and narratives of identity have (re)emerged in south-east and north-east Asia, in countries spanning Indonesia to South Korea. Furthermore, with the rise of India and China on the world stage, Western concepts of nation, nationhood and national representation are acquiring new meaning and significance as the balance of world power gravitates inexorably towards Asia. Like Taiwan, Hong Kong and to a lesser extent Singapore, have also experienced the effects of China's growing economic, political and cultural power in the world, and at different times, have likewise been preoccupied with defining their national identity. For example, there is significant evidence to suggest that, prior to the 1997 handover of Hong Kong to China, there was an upsurge of interest in national

identity issues amongst artists, curators and art writers who sought to re-examine, recover and redefine Hong Kong's identity.¹⁴²⁶ This study could thus offer a useful comparative framework for an analysis of the ways in which Hong Kong's identity has been defined and articulated in the production, representation and critique of art in Hong Kong.

Inevitably, this research has raised more questions than can be addressed within the scope and context of this thesis. In addition to the potential comparison of constructions of identity in Taiwan and Hong Kong, another key area warrants attention. This is the role of Taiwan aboriginal art in the construction and representation of Taiwan's national identity. Since the mid-1990s contemporary Taiwan aboriginal art has been attracting some attention, with several exhibitions organised by museums such as the Kaohsiung Fine Arts Museum (Chapter One). However, in these exhibitions aboriginal art is often framed, curatorially, in an Austronesian context and some contemporary aboriginal artists, including Wallis Labai (in Chinese, Wu Ding-wu, 吳鼎武) and Rahic Talif (or La Haaiz, 拉黑子), have questioned the ways their art is being deployed in these exhibitions for political purposes to promote Taiwan's Austronesian origins. Furthermore, as Taiwan is forging increasingly closer relations with China, one might consider how Taiwan aboriginal artists' roles and practices may change, and how their works may be represented in future exhibitions? Will they be defined as another ethnic minority group within the larger Greater China paradigm, or will they be recognised and appreciated both as aboriginals and contemporary artists?

¹⁴²⁶ As part of an ARC-funded research grant (a co-partnership between ANU and Lingnan University), in 2007 I undertook field research in Hong Kong at the Asia Art Archive and I interviewed local artists, curators and writers in Hong Kong, particularly during the 1990s during the lead-up to the Hong Kong handover. I discovered certain conceptual connections between artists and curators in Taiwan and Hong Kong who were exploring identity issues *vis-à-vis* China. Exhibitions including: *One Day in Hong Kong* (a photographic exhibition co-curated by David Clarke and Oscar Ho, 1990-1991); *Being China (Being Hong Kong)* (1996) and the *Hong Kong Culture Series* (1991), both of which were curated by Oscar Ho and explored local themes relating to Hong Kong's identity. These connections are discussed further in my article 'Re-Orienting Taiwan: The China Factor in Contemporary Art from Taiwan', *Perspectives*, Sept. 2010, Asia Art Archive. <http://www.aaa.org.hk/Diaaologue/Details/889> (accessed 9/5/2012).

As clearly demonstrated, conceptions of identity and nation are imagined and unstable constructs. Some scholars have argued that the *nation*, as a bounded entity, in fact no longer exists in this transnational, borderless global community. Others observe that we have entered a 'postnational' phase in which representations of nation and nationhood in museological practice have become irrelevant and/or outmoded.¹⁴²⁷ Yet, until Taiwan's national status is resolved *vis-à-vis* China, the *idea* of the nation and of identity, however elusive it may be, is likely to remain firmly entrenched in Taiwan's national imaginary. In this twenty-first century, the desire to define and express a sense of *Taiwanese* national identity has clearly diminished in visual art. However, as the 2012 Presidential elections attest, the right to freedom of expression and self-determination is still strongly upheld and defended not only in the visual arts but also in the wider local community. As closer economic and cultural ties are forged between Taiwan and China, Taiwan's art community is looking across the strait to Hong Kong, which is increasingly becoming integrated and culturally assimilated into Greater China - a prospect Taiwan's art community would both challenge and resist.

Focusing on the interrelationship between politics and art during the post-martial law years from 1987 until 2010, this thesis highlights how artists, curators and museums have artistically and intellectually contributed in significant and often surprising ways towards the development of Taiwan's identity. These contributions offer valuable insights into the ways the nation has been imagined in Taiwan and they highlight the dynamic and enduring nature of Taiwan's quest for national identity.

¹⁴²⁷ Rhiannon Mason, 'The Postnational Museum: Rethinking the Concept', *Building Identity: The Making of National Museums and Identity Politics*, National Museum of History, Taipei 16-18 Nov. 2011. In response to this statement the Director of the National History Museum (the organisation which hosted the conference), Chang Yui-tan (張譽騰), raised a pertinent rhetorical question. He asked since Taiwan has not achieved 'national' status (as far as China and the international diplomatic community are concerned) can Taiwan's museums be recognised as *postnational*; or might they be able to claim quasi-national status?

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY

This glossary includes names, terms and phrases as well as publications, which have frequently appeared throughout the thesis; and/or whose romanisation differs in Chinese pinyin.

	Traditional characters	Chinese pinyin
Names of People		
Chiang Kai-shek	蔣介石	Jiang Jieshi/ Jiang Zhongzheng
Chang Chen-yu	張振宇	Zhang Zhenyu
Chen Chieh-jen	陳界仁	Chen Jieren
Chen Shui-bian	陳水扁	Chen Shuibian
Sun Yat-sen	孫逸仙	Sun Zhongshan (孫中山)
Hsu Wen-rei (alias Manray Hsu)	徐文瑞	Xu Wenrui
Huang Hai-ming	黃海鳴	Huang Haiming
Huang Kuang-nan	黃光男	Huang Guangnan
Huang Tsai-lang	黃才郎	Huang Cailang
Lee Teng-hui	李登輝	Li Denghui
Lin Mun-lee	林曼麗	Lin Manli
Ma Ying-jeou	馬英九	Ma Yingjiu
Mei Dean-E	梅丁衍	Mei Dingyan
Ni Tsai-chin	倪再沁	Ni Zaiqin
Shih Rae-jen (JJ Shih)	石瑞仁	Shi Ruiren
Victoria Lu	陸蓉之	Lu Rongzhi
Wang Jia-Ji (Jason Wang)	王嘉驥	Wang Jiaji
Wu Mali	吳瑪俐	Wu Mali
Wu Tien-chang	吳天章	Wu Tianzhang
Yang Mao-lin	楊茂林	Yang Maolin
Yang Wen-I	羊文漪	Yang Wenyi
Yao Jui-chung	姚瑞中	Yao Ruizhong
Names of Organisations		
Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)	民主進步黨	Minzhu jinbu dang (abbrev. Minjindang)
Kuomintang (KMT)/ Chinese Nationalists	國民黨	Guomindang
tangwai	黨外	dangwai
Taipei Fine Arts Museum	臺北市立美術館	Taipei shili meishuguan
National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (NTMFA) (formerly	國立台灣美術館	Guoli Taiwan meishuguan

Taiwan Province Museum of
Fine Arts or Taiwan Museum of
Art)

Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts 高雄市立美術館
(KMFA)

Eastern (*Tung-fang hua-hui*) 東方畫會

Fifth Moon (*Wu-yue hua-hui*) 五月畫會

Gaoxiong shili meishuguan

Dongfang huahui

Wuyue huahui

Recurring Terms and phrases

Taiwanese/local/native/
indigenous

本土

bentu

Taiwan consciousness

本土意識

bentu yishi

Taiwanisation

本土化

bentuhua

Taiwanese (people)

本省人

benshengren

Mainlanders

外省人

waishengren

2/28 incident

二二八事件

er er ba

subjectivity

主體性

zhutixing

Hsiang-tu (Homeland)

鄉土

xiangtu

Names of Publications

Artist

藝術家

Yishujia

Lion Art (Hsiung-Shih Meishu)

雄獅美術

Xiongshi meishu

Modern Art (previously Taipei

現代美術

Xiandai meishu

Fine Arts Museum Quarterly
until 1988)

Journal of Taipei Fine Arts
Museum

現代美術學報

Xiandai meishuxuebao

Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts
(abbrev. Taiwan Art)

臺灣美術

Taiwan meishu

Art & Collection

典藏藝術

Diancang yishu

Dragon Art

炎黃藝術

Yanhuang meishu

Chinese Contemporary Art
News

當代藝術新聞

Dangdai yishu xinwen

Taiwan Consciousness in
Taiwan Art

台灣美術中的台灣意識

Taiwan meishu zhong de

The Central Daily News

中央日報

Taiwan yishi

Liberty Times

自由時報

Zhongyang ribao

China Times

中國時報

Ziyou shibao

United Daily News

聯合時報

Zhongguo shibao

The Independence Morning
Post

自立早報

Lienhe shibao

Zili zaobao

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEWS

Chang Chen-yu	1995	Taipei
Chang Fang-wei	2009	Taipei
Chen Chieh-jen	1995	Taipei
Chen Shun-chu	1995	Taipei
Hsiao Chong-ray	1995	Tainan
Hsieh Su-chen	1995	Taipei
Huang Tsai-lang	1995	Kaohsiung
JJ Shih	1995	Taipei
JJ Shih	2007	Taipei
JJ Shih	2009	Taipei
Lee Ming-sheng	1995	Taipei
Lee Tsai-chien	1995	Taipei
Lee Yali	1995	Taipei
Lee Yu-lin	2009	Taipei
Liao Hsien-hao	2011	Canberra
Lin Hsing-yue	1995	Taipei
Mei Dean-E	1998	Taipei
Mei Dean-E	2007	Taipei
Mei Dean-E	2008	Taipei
Mei Dean-E	20011	Taipei
Ni Tsai-chin	1995	Taichung
Oliver Ye	1995	Taipei
Tsong Pu	1995	Taipei
Victoria Lu	1995	Taipei
Victoria Lu	2009	Taipei
Wang Jia-ji	2009	Taipei
Wu Mali	1995	Taipei
Wu Mali	2007	Taipei
Wu Mali	2008	Taipei
Wu Mali	2009	Taipei
Wu Tien-chang	1995	Taipei
Yang Mao-lin	1995	Taipei
Yang Mao-lin	2007	Taipei
Yao Jui-chung	1995	Taipei
Yao Jui-chung	10/9/1998	Taipei
Yao Jui-chung	21/7/1998	Taipei
Yao Jui-chung	2007	Taipei
Yao Jui-chung	17/9/2008	Taipei
Yao Jui-chung	24/9/2008	Taipei
Yao Jui-chung	2011	
Yang Wen-I	1995	Taipei
Yang Wen-I	2009	Taipei

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